SCREEN

Teaching Film and T.V.

PLUS: 'CARRIE', THE SAS AND PAGE THREE GIRLS!

EVENTS

Film and Television Events and Courses

In addition to organising a range of educational activities itself SEFT will be supporting and promoting events organised by other organisations. We intend to publish information on day and weekend events, conferences and courses.

Please send details of any events (including date, place, course fees, contact addresses etc) to Rod Stoneman, Education Officer, SEFT.

Material for inclusion in Screen (November/December) must be received before September 19, 1983.

EDITORIAL

When *Screen* incorporated *Screen Education* last year a journal was created whose field of reference was impossibly large and complex. A journal of advanced screen theory with an international readership and a legacy of debate that sometimes resembles an incubus was supposed to assimilate a journal of advanced educational theory, in relation to popular culture, which had developed a national reputation and a range of regular contributors many of whom neither knew nor cared much about *Screen* and its history. Outside pressures had determined the incorporation, and only a left pluralism of cultural theory and practice, legitimately and reciprocally representing the membership of SEFT and the readership of the journals, and a certain optimism of the will provided the bases upon which the new magazine could be founded.

Screen incorporating Screen Education, the new *Screen*, has also struggled to become more accessible in the manner described in the opening statement of the 'Sex and Spectatorship' edition which reaffirmed the journal and SEFT's commitment 'to work in a number of interrelated areas: education, TV, independent cinema, feminism and sexual politics'. Of these areas, education has been the most neglected – but this comment needs at once to be qualified: just as the many educationalists who read *Screen* may need at times to think as concretely as possible about pedagogic theory and practice, they also need, as their contributions indicate, opportunities for debate and analysis through which their objects of study, fields of knowledge and related perspectives can be clarified and shaped. The new *Screen* has provided these opportunities, but the strength of the later editions of the parent journals was their ability, intermittently, to establish the connections between films and television, film and television education, and political theory and political action which are systematically suppressed in British educational life. *Screen Education* in particular addressed teachers without making the patronising assumption that teachers in different locations needed always to be interpellated differently: questions about 'Girl Number Twenty' were demonstrably part of the same critical project as questions to Jutta Brückner.

With this edition *Screen* resumes that project more explicitly, deliberately evoking the debates about *educational* theory and practice which must exist alongside the debates taken up in the last six editions. No single edition can develop all these questions, but the continuities established here will be sustained regularly over the next year, and the *kinds* of writing offered are as significant as the texts themselves since they affirm *Screen*'s interest in writing which offers:

accounts from pedagogic practice, including teaching at any level, informed by the theoretical and conceptual concerns of the 'old' *Screen* and *Screen Education*;

analyses of the social relationships determining educational contexts – classrooms, studios, workshops, theatres, for example;

analyses of state intervention in education;

Marxist critiques of the epistemological bases of media education;

critiques of teaching materials or texts.

Not enough attention has been paid by SEFT's journals to materials used in teaching and the inclusion of Bruce Babbington's critique of the BFI Education slide notes on *Carrie* is important. It also presented a kind of 'limit case' for the journal: the educational use-value of including a review of teaching materials was held by the issue editors ·to outweigh certain disagreements with the views expressed. This edition also includes reviews by Lez Cooke and Alison Light of the Open University's Popular Culture Course and *Re-Reading English*, two endeavours which bear significant traces of the educational project undertaken by SEFT and its journals over the past decade.

Consistent with our argument for a balanced heterogeneity as necessary and desirable, this edition includes articles about popular cultural concerns whose educational use-value lies in their analysis of potential objects of study. The pieces on the representations of the SAS and the Page Three

Girl could have appeared in either of the earlier journals and take forward the concerns of both. However, just as the two earlier journals did not publish enough writing by schoolteachers and feminists engaged in media cultural practice, so this edition is unsatisfactory in these respects. (Although Judith Williamson's piece in *Screen Education* 40 called up at least three of the articles in this edition, and teachers at all levels except primary and secondary have contributed.)

As its title indicates, SEFT is committed to education and the journal demonstrates that commitment: it also proposes that education is not synonymous with schooling and that the classroom and the lecture room are not its only sites, crucial though they are. We invite discussion on the position and the proposition.

PHILIP SIMPSON, GILLIAN SKIRROW AND SIMON WATNEY
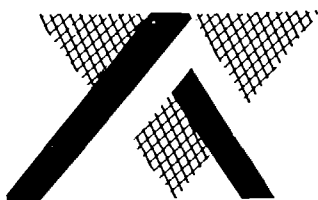
TWICE A VICTIM:

CARRIE MEETS THE BFI

─ BRUCE BABINGTON EXAMINES
AN INFLUENTIAL READING
OF THE HIGH SCHOOL
HORROR FILM

A SET OF SLIDES of Brian De Palma's controversial horror film, *Carrie*, accompanied by Notes for the use of teachers, have recently been published by the British Film Institute's Education Department.[1] Because of the authority these Notes will have at various levels of film education, it is important that something should be said about their methodological unsoundness and their reduction of certain critical positions to the mechanical operation of unthinking prejudice.

The Discourse of Incoherence

The BFI Notes argue that *Carrie* is without coherent meaning. The film is thus presented as incoherent, except on a single deep level, an imputed discourse of misogyny. To preserve this assertion against any views that might challenge it (e.g. by demonstrating that its treatment of sexuality, central to the film however it is approached, is, on the contrary, complex) the Notes adopt three main strategies. Quite illegitimately invoking the authority of Todorov's book, *The Fantastic*,[2] they claim that incoherence is inevitable because of *Carrie's* flawed narrative structure. Any further possible coherence that might arise from consideration of author and genre in relation to the other determinants of the film is dismissed by a simple repression of generic and authorial considerations. Finally, any remaining possibilities of meaning are then dissolved by the claim that where there may seem to be meaning, there is actually only 'display' a term used throughout in strict opposition to 'meaning' and 'coherence'.

Repression, sexuality   5
and aggression: the
overhead shot of the
girls' volleyball
game.

How radically the Notes' commentary works to limit the area of discussion can be seen in the statement about the first narrative image of the film, the overhead shot of the girls playing volleyball:

> ... the elaborate crane shot draws attention to itself and shows the girls as an almost abstract pattern of colour and movement – a 'stylistic' credit in addition to the authorial title. Note also how De Palma later sets up a loose set of 'rhymes' with the overhead shot repeatedly being used to both show disturbing activity in the frame – Carrie in the closet (not on Slide), Mrs White chopping the carrot (Slide 36), Sue's nightmare (Slide 57) and to emphasise the disturbing quality of the action depicted by virtue of the unusual 'unrealistic' point of view on it. (p 91)

Paradoxically, a critique based on a reading of the film in terms of its supposed ideological regressiveness, analyses the first image, where we would expect to find a concentration of semiotic-thematic indicators, in almost wholly formalistic terms. This (and it is representative of the Notes' procedure) is the necessary result of an attempt to erase all discourses (critical or within the film itself) that might offer competition. To draw attention to the density of connotations readable within the image as it plays into the developing narrative, is to run the risk of allowing the text to demonstrate coherence rather than incoherence.

As the very least several things are worth remarking on in this first image. There is the introduction through the girls' volleyball game of the idea of games as a substitute for aggression, which immediately brings into play the Freudian loci of repression, sexuality and aggressive urges, as well as the systems of rules that contain them (the laws of sports, the rules of the High School, the unwritten laws of social behaviour and appearance). The game is highly (shockingly, in the conventional sense that girls are usually typed as less aggressive) competitive, and Carrie is abused for losing it, thus establishing tensions between

[3] Also, of course, in traditional literary usages, e.g. Pandarus' song in *Troilus and Cressida*, Act V, Scene 10, lines 42-45.

winners and losers, and between the individual and the group. The latter is further played upon in the difference between the acceptable group-approved deviance of Norma, in her red shorts and red cap, and Carrie's unacceptable deviance.

The reduction of the girls to abstract pattern drains away the important colour significations of their costumes, the yellow and black of 'The Stingers', a connotative chain developed through the bee as the emblem of the Bates High School, and the kids' after-school meeting place, 'The Beehive'. When Chris Hargenson tells Norma of her plan to ruin Carrie's Prom night, the two are photographed standing on the bee emblem. The analogy of the bee who dies in stinging and the lover still exists in popular consciousness[3], embodying a set of feelings about the dangers of sexuality (including, but not limited to, male fear of women, which is in danger of being reified into a psychological catch-all in recent psycho-analytically oriented criticism). The figure's pointing to the ambiguous creative-destructive, sadistic-masochistic components of sexuality is grotesquely underlined by a signification alone made possible by the overhead shot, the markings of the volleyball court which stand out like a huge primitive stylisation of a phallus and vagina, marking sexuality as the battleground of the film. The other elements working at high pressure – e.g. the pattern of *doppelgänger* shadows again allowed by the overhead shot, the set of contrasts between the conventional beauty and physical self-sufficiency of the girls and Carrie – hardly need extended notation.

Carrie on the volleyball court – a contrast to the other girls' strength and beauty.

Now what audiences – on which viewing – would pick up which signifiers – in what kind of shaping process? These are enormously problematic questions which it may be unfair to ask the Notes to answer, even though they announce their project of 'a more general examination of *meaning* in film' (p 1). But clearly the few instances I have given are readable in the image, and a discussion that either represses them by omis-

sion or deems them incoherent by a misunderstanding of narrative theory, is itself open to interrogation.

The Discourse of Misogyny

The Notes' absolute commitment to the view that *Carrie* can only be read by an aware viewer as misogynistic is at no point argued. It is an unquestioning acceptance (which there is a danger teachers and students will in turn unquestioningly accept) of two articles in *Jump Cut* 14, the more extended of which, 'Carrie: Ragtime – the Horror of Growing Up Female' by Serafina Bathrick,[4] is the one that most informs the Notes' statements. The objections to the film in *Jump Cut* 'seem incontroverti- ble' (p 2). Thus two fragments of discourse representing the naively appropriative aspects of radical film commentary (castigated by Place and Burton in their excellent writing on the problematic of feminist film criticism[5]) are simply assumed to have said all there is to be said on the subject.

The acceptance of any view as 'incontrovertible' without a clear state- ment of why it is so is alarming, as is the naiveté of the underlying con- ception of feminist criticism as a seamless entity, so that any fragment of it (no matter how deficient) is granted unquestioned authority, simply by being feminist. No critical position can be excused from describing tex- tual phenomena accurately, or claim a license for inventing or repressing textual details. Thus it is disturbing that Bathrick (uncriticised by the Notes) should describe Chris Hargenson as 'a spoiled nymphomaniac'. Clearly Chris' sexuality is in no way healthy, but since she is seen in sexual relations only with Billy Nolan, the text – whatever else it may be accused of doing – cannot be said to present her in those terms. It is equally disturbing when the Notes claim as evidence of De Palma's 'urgent desire to prove the impossibility of community among women' that the girls are shown 'fighting for men' (p 3). It may be felt that such a scene would be consistent with what we know of the girls, but the im- mitigable fact is that there is no moment in the film that justifies this comment.

Briefly, Bathrick's argument is that the film's real project is, by its 'images of blood and fetishised body parts', to present a view of women as irrational and dangerous, wholly controlled by their biology. 'Every woman in *Carrie* is understood entirely in terms of her sexual frustration or potency', a statement for which a series of extremely strained justifica- tions is made. Women are presented as incapable of communing with each other, and in the film's reactionary workings all suggestions of socio-economic causes are omitted.

In unquestioningly accepting this version of the 'real' meaning of *Car- rie*, the BFI Notes repress the different and more positive ways in which other critics have looked at the thematic of menstruation and the associ- ated presentation of women in the film. David Pirie, for instance, wrote: 'in this milieu, Carrie's menstrual fluid mocks the possibility of her

[4] *Jump Cut* 14, pp 9-10. Also, Michelle Citron, 'Carrie Meets Marathon Man', pp 10-12. The latter, which compares the two films as, respectively, female and male 'rite of passage' films, is both more moderate and more intelligent than Bathrick's article, not attempting, for instance, to denigrate Sue and Miss Collins. However, like the cruder article that is the main influence on the Notes, it ends up by reading the role of women in the film as merely evil and destructive.

[5] Janey Place and Julianne Burton, 'Feminist Film Criticism', *Movie* 22, pp 53-62.

[6] David Pirie, 'Carrie', *Movie* 25, p 23.

[7] Paula Matusa, 'Corruption and Catastrophe: De Palma's Carrie', *Film Quarterly*, Autumn 1977, p 32.

developing into a woman in any real sense', and 'with the possible exception of Miss Collins ... Carrie is the only non-colonised woman in the film'.[6] Both statements have it in them to suggest that the film may be read as not simply sexist, but as an examination – in the excessive terms of the horror genre – of the socio-sexual structuring of women in a particular society. Paula Matusa notes: 'Carrie wants to deal adequately with her newfound adulthood and sexuality.'[7] Her observation points to something fundamental about the film that both Bathrick and the Notes ignore, the many elements that function to produce audience sympathy for, and identification with, Carrie (e.g. powerful narrative identification; point of view shots; play on the Ugly Duckling and Cinderella stories and also on audiences' fantasies of committing revenge on those who slight them; the star presence of Sissy Spacek). It is possible, and consonant with many details of the narrative's intelligence, as well as its investment of sympathy in its victim-monster, to see it developing the wordplay in the heroine's name beyond the obvious (i.e. Carrie as carrier of Eve and Pandora's legacy) into Carrie as the bewildered carrier of the socio-sexual burden of the construction of womanhood in her society.

Bathrick's account (and the Notes' support for it) is based around two general strategies: a refusal to consider the text as open to any readings but its own, on the assumption that all enlightened readers will see the film identically; and a repression, by omission or distortion, of any occasions in the text that complicate or contradict the reading assumed.

Thus the simplification of Carrie (already seen transmitted to Chris) is extended to Sue Snell, the 'normal world' heroine. Sue's complexity is deflected by a technique of simplistic abuse. She can be discounted because she is merely 'a well-meaning monogamist'. Presumably if she had been given two boyfriends instead of one, the critic might have been prepared to modify her statement that Sue is typed only by her sexuality, for she is shown acting (alone of all her peers except Frieda) to help Carrie, and she is clearly presented as more intellectual than her boyfriend, Tommy Ross. She studies while he watches TV, and is obviously the author of the poem attributed to him in the English class. She is also less interested in her image than the other girls, saying to Tommy when Miss Collins suggests he will look silly at the Prom, 'We don't care how we look, do we', to which the slightly narcissistic Tommy grins, unconvinced.

The second major 'good' character who has to be radically simplified is Miss Collins, the PE teacher who tries to help Carrie. Bathrick and the BFI Notes are aware of the ambiguity that plays around Miss Collins in at least two ways – firstly, her sharing, in a more acceptable form, the world view of dating, physical beauty and Proms that she so despises in the girls; and, secondly, her aggression towards the girls who torment Carrie, provoking the suspicion that in punishing them she is tainted with feelings other than genuine outrage. These aspects, and Miss Collins' own admission to the Principal that when she hit Carrie to calm her down she felt aggressively towards her, are interesting ambivalences that might be investigated in terms of the text's intelligence. Instead,

Miss Collins is turned from the sympathetic (but ironically flawed) character of the film into an embittered grotesque. In Bathrick's reading she (as a woman alone) is twinned with the insane Mrs White, and presented as equally full of sexual loathing, and equally responsible for the horrors of the Bates High School Prom night. Now, at the very least, it is possible to read Miss Collins' ambivalances not as evidence of inborn female flaws, but as something much more interesting. Her advice to Carrie about make-up can be seen as an ironic revelation of her own (and the audience's) uneasy hovering between commitment to, and criticism of, the values of romance and physical beauty. As for the revelation that she has sadistic impulses, it is interesting that both Miss Collins and Sue, two of the three 'good' characters who try to help Carrie, share an initial violence towards her, which they are forced to admit to themselves. Retrospectively, the image of Sue (of all the girls), tearing open the tampon dispenser is extremely upsetting. This violence can be read,

Ambiguous
aggression: Sue tears
open the tampon
dispenser.

10

8 Frieda's late
appearance in the
film (the Prom
decoration scene
where she talks to
Sue is, as far as I
can ascertain, her
first appearance),
and her relative
underdevelopment
as a character
(relative, say, to
Norma), might well
raise a genuine
question of local
narrative control —
as distinct from the
many spurious ones
raised. However,
from the point of
her entry into the
narrative, her
presence and her
sympathetic
interest in Carrie
are emphasised.
Indeed the first of
the series of
distorted point of
view shots of the
crowd that reflect
Carrie's
interpretation of
the events of the
Prom, has Frieda as
the central image,
surrounded by
others. This
precedes the similar
shot with Miss
Collins at the
centre.

at the cost of all complexity, in a mechanical way that produces a view of women as innately depraved (even the best of them!). This is the meaning Bathrick finds in the text and through which her discourse places itself in a position of unchallenged ideological superiority over it, as an instance of patriarchal filmic violence upon women.

However, there is another possible reading, consistent with the Normality/Abnormality waverings characteristic of the Horror genre. This is the recognition that the abnormal characters (Mrs White and Chris Hargenson, the abnormal abnormal and the normal abnormal respectively) are not wholly different from, but grotesque extensions of, impulses that are found in normal, only partially-'colonised' characters like Sue and Miss Collins.

Perhaps the most blatant instance of the actual repression of detail (especially since she chastises De Palma for denying female community) is Bathrick's total omission from the film (followed by the Notes) of Sue's friend Frieda. First introduced asking Sue if the rumour about Tommy and Carrie is true, Frieda is then much in evidence at the Prom where she greets Carrie, comments on her dress, offers her a place at her table, bounces up and down with joy at Carrie's success, actually crowns her onstage, and reacts with horror (a reaction studiedly compared with that of Norma next to whom she is standing) to the blood falling on Carrie. It is no doubt possible to read the female community that Frieda offers as sentimentally conceived, but to ignore her completely at Bathrick and the Notes do argues that neither finds it convenient to see her.[8]

A reading which does much more justice to the actual complexity of the film would see it organised around the various social and sexual ideologies which surround the girls and the older women characters, and which are immediately brought into the fiercest play by the opening trauma of Carrie's passage into womanhood through her late menstruation and the shocking violence of her peer-group's reaction to the event.

The film clearly proposes a metaphoric equivalence between Carrie's telekinetic powers, which first appear after she menstruates, and the (creative or destructive) potential of her newly born sexuality. Balked, conditioned, mocked, she attempts to escape from the crazed religious-sexual ideology of her mother's assertion 'Eve was weak!', in which sexuality is represented by the sado-masochistic meanings of the Saint Sebastian figure that Carrie prays to. She resists her mother's definition of her sexuality as defiled and witchlike, but the only alternative available to her is a normality shown to be as repressive as her mother's abnormality (so that the real twins are not Mrs White and Miss Collins, but Mrs White and Chris, the doll-like, physically perfect, gumchewing beauty who is the most excessive product of the normal world).

The crucial menstruation scene raises problems of interpretation in an extreme (though not necessarily incoherent) form, largely through its excessiveness. The reaction of the girls — driving Carrie like a small rodent into the corner and pelting her with tampons and the cry 'Plug it up!' — seems excessive, even allowing for rationalisations like the physically healthy choosing the weak as a scapegoat.

Sex and sado-
masochism: Carrie
prays to a statute of
Saint Sebastian.

11

Of course the problem can be simply solved if you argue that any ques-
tions raised by this excessiveness are disqualified, since the real motiva-
tion of all significant meanings has been pre-defined in De Palma's mis-
ogyny. It seems to me, however, more interesting to see the girls' hyper-
bolic reactions as a revelation of their own self-hatred, of their own
unconscious, culturally-developed fear of the female in themselves. This
is projected onto the menstruating Carrie, superficially all that is most
unlike themselves – white, cowering, helpless, childlike – but at an
unconscious level the image of their own helplessness, a helplessness
they are blinded to in their active complicity with the ideology which has
shaped them. Taken literally, their cry of 'Plug it up!' is a demand that
what biologically makes them female should be abolished, stoppered up,
a truly horrifying wish.

As for the claim that there is no socio-economic contextualisating in
the film, there are many suggestions of a network of causes that has
shaped the characters as they are – religion, the suburban world, the
structures of family life, the whole 'dream' apotheosised in the Prom.
Like the grotesque pastoral facade to the pig abattoir where Billy
slaughters the pig for Chris (there is unfortunately no slide of this key
image) the exterior of the various aspects of 'the dream' hide a different
interior reality. It is perhaps significant that a clearly displayed piece of
graffiti in the gym reads 'Carrie White eats shit' and that word 'shit'
forms a significant part of Chris' vocabulary. If Carrie has ingested reli-
gion, Chris has eaten (like her peers) a lot of secular shit, and, as in the
most interesting horror films, the monstrosity of this monster of the
normal is not presented vacuously free of context, but has its suggested
causes.

The Question of Narrative Structure

In meeting difficulties, apparent ambiguities, etc. in the text, the Notes

[9] Todorov, op. cit, pp 24-57 especially.

[10] ibid, p 44, pp 54-57, pp 42-3, etc.

[11] ibid, p 42.

[12] ibid, p 7. Also 'We might say that in art we are dealing with a language of which every utterance is agrammatical at the moment of its performance', p 6.

argue that rather than seeking for meaning and coherence (typed as only an auteurist procedure – p 1), we should see that the better explanation lies in its mismanagement of narrative structure. To justify this the Notes invoke the generic theorising of the Bulgarian critic, Todorov, in his book *The Fantastic*, with its careful delineation of three genres: the Marvellous (understandable only in terms of the supernatural), the Uncanny (explicable in terms of the rational), and the Fantastic (which hesitates – enforcing a hesitation in the reader – between the two explanations, neither of which is privileged over the other)[9].

The BFI Notes argue that *Carrie* becomes an incoherent failure as a narrative because (p 2), instead of being consistently a fantastic narrative, or consistently an uncanny narrative, it falls 'uneasily between' the two and is therefore 'arbitrarily structured'. Whatever may be said pro or con the narrative of *Carrie*, this argument simply cannot survive inspection. Todorov, its supposed source, makes it absolutely clear that the Marvellous, the Uncanny and the Fantastic, in their pure states, are models from which the majority of works deviate, giving rise to intermediate genres such as the Fantastic-Uncanny, the Fantastic-Marvellous, the Allegorical-Fantastic, etc.[10] Falling between is thus in Todorov's descriptive rather than prescriptive account a generic likelihood, and most appearances of the Fantastic are described as 'evanescent'.[11] In line with this construction of intermediate types rather than condemning exceptions to pure paradigms, Todorov warns that 'we must understand that a text is not only the product of a pre-existing combinatorial system . . . it is also a transformation of that system'.[12]

There are many attempts to demonstrate this imputed lack of coherence in the text. For instance (p 10), it is stated of the blood motif that it is 'one of a number of strands of meaning none of which is totally worked through in the film'. But what does '*totally* worked through' mean? As elsewhere in the Notes all concepts of heterogeneity, ambiguity and polysemy seem, if not totally forgotten, then regarded with intense suspicion. Of the blood motif in *Carrie*, the least that can be said is that there is a complex chain of highly charged images placed in relation to each other with the potentiality to accrue meaning: Carrie's menstruating blood, the 'Blood of the Lamb' (sung by Mrs White), the blood of Stigmata, the blood of Saint Sebastian, the blood from the pig abattoir, Mrs White's crazed reference to the boys gathering like flies around the menstrual blood, and so on. Clearly the accusations (p 3) that 'at any particular point it's unclear what we are supposed to think' and 'many of the elements will not yield up meanings of any kind' beg every relevant question to an 'examination of meaning in film'.

In a similar instance it is claimed that the Sue Snell strand of the narrative is 'relatively unorganised' (again, 'relative' to what?) and that there is 'a lack of clarity about Sue's function in the narrative' (p 10). Such remarks would seem to be built upon a complete disregard for the conventions of narrative (and especially character-psychology) economy in the 90-120 minutes feature film, since the progress of Sue from early taunter of Carrie, to shock at the withdrawal of Prom privileges, to

shame and repentance when Miss Collins dresses down the girls, is in no way arcane or problematic for any reasonably conceived audience. It may be 'relatively unorganised' if compared with, say, the organisation of the consciousness of Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, but it forms a clear and effective shorthand in the terms of a different convention.

The Notes are particularly perverse when they comment (p 10) to the effect that 'the regular use of closeup' 'decontexts' Sue. The close-ups of Sue in the scene of the dressing-down by Miss Collins belong in fact to a series of close-ups of other members of the class reacting to Miss Collins (a fact which is not mentioned by the notes, thus giving the impression that they have a different status from other shots in the scene)[13]. If the close-ups decontext Sue, then they must decontext the others, and if they do not decontext the others, it is hard to see how they decontext Sue. In fact a reading of Sue's facial kinesics is contextualised not only by common psychological-moral significations (her downcast eyes) but by analogy with and differentiation from the other girls' expressions in close-up.

[13] The Notes' remarks about Sue in the Prom scene are equally misguided and depend on the suppression of the clear evidence of several scenes: Sue's conversations with Tommy about Carrie; Sue and Tommy being interviewed by Miss Collins; Sue and Frieda talking about Carrie and Tommy; as well as the psychological and kinesic evidence mentioned.

Close-up of Sue's reaction to Miss Collins' punishment threat.

There are many similar examples. The ambiguity attached to Tommy Ross is decried (p 11); the evocation of the world of *American Graffiti* (p 11) is noted but criticised 'as not developed elsewhere in the film', without any reason given why it should be. And, most extremely, it is claimed (p 11) that the film does not develop the central opposition 'between the secure light world of small-town teen-pics and the dark world of Gothic Horror'. On the contrary, the film develops the opposition at every point of its progress, what David Pirie called in his *Movie* review, 'the recurring visual theme: the ... eruption of blood into the dream'[14].

One last representative example of a reading that refuses to consider any explanation except in its own limited terms: the Notes argue (p 11)

[14] Pirie, op cit, p 24.

that 'the baroque religious (Catholic) intensity is in itself an implausible realisation of Mrs White's fundamentalism as evidenced in her devotional tracts'. With this accusation of implausibility, unspoken realist criteria are suddenly invoked. Why not the explanation that the unrealistic binding together of both Catholic and fundamentalist elements functions to produce a totalising image of a perversely destructive Christianity not available in realist terms where Mrs White would have to be one or the other?

Authorless, Genreless: Carrie as Orphan

The next set of strategies by which the Notes impose their reading on the film is to repress all authorial and generic considerations from its analysis. The wholesale erasure of generic considerations is not immediately apparent. The introductory note signals an expectation that the teachers addressed will have an understanding of contemporary Horror thematics when it explains how the Notes have turned away from the examination of '70s thematics towards 'a more general examination of *meaning* in film, here understood both as problems of interpretation and ideological ascription' (p 1). This is fair enough; but what actually happens is that, with all problems of interpretation repressed, wholly *un*problematic ideological ascription take over (confusing, what is more, a single aspect of ideology – the imputed misogyny – with the totality of ideology). All this is done without reference to the question: *in what ways do the conventions of the Horror film mediate the process of meaning?*

Unless we agree to write off as impossibly regressive the whole area of Horror literature and film from the Gothic Novel and Poe to De Palma, we cannot simply accept that the display of regressive states and actions – perversions, obsessions, misanthropy, misogyny, incest, cruelty, madness, etc – can only produce regressive social images. Such states and actions are the *sine qua non* of the Horror film and Fantasy (in its wider definitions) and it is through their presence that the more subversive activities of the genre are produced.

Clearly the line between the significantly troubling and the unhealthily exploitative in the genres has always been a fine one, never more so than in the contemporary film with its freedom to be graphically violent, and the feeding into its lower levels of the pornographic film. More than in any other genres there are likely to be clashing views of significance, where one person's creative use of horror is another person's unregenerate sadism. The total disagreement over the worth of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* between radical critics committed to the value of the Horror genre is a good instance of this.[15]

With particular regard to the question of misogyny (and making a distinction between the horror-pornographic pulp films and those with a claim to complexity), it may be agreed that the Horror film's preference for female victims reflects various aspects of the positioning of women in the culture from which it comes[16], but the phenomenon is double-edged.

[15] See Robin Wood and Andrew Britton in Andrew Britton et al (eds), *The American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, Toronto, Festival of Festivals, pp 22 and 41.

[16] Steve Neale, 'Halloween: Suspense, Aggression and the Look', *Framework* 14, Spring, 1981, p 28.

Dependent on contextualisation, the presentation of woman as victim (or indeed as aggressor), may actively reflect on the mechanisms of culture. Thus Rosemary Jackson can say of nineteenth century Gothic fiction, which at one level she finds 'heavily misogynistic', that it also introduces 'repressed female energies and absent unities'[17]. My argument has been that *Carrie* is not a misogynistic film, but even if there were aspects of it that could be so interpreted, the argument would not be closed, since repression at one level does not guarantee repression at all levels.

A further point about the conventions of the Horror and related genres is that they are, and are expected by audiences to be, sites of recidivist impulses which are as much, in fact even more, attributed to men than to women – the male:aggressor / female:victim pattern being the most common. It is hardly to be expected that positive role models (either male or female) should flourish in a genre whose central motions are to call up ambivalent feelings of attraction and repulsion around taboo objects and themes, and whose real centre of sympathy is often the monster ('The Return of the Repressed'). I suspect that a deep unspoken cause of the hostility towards *Carrie* is that, by producing an almost wholly female world (a sort of *Little Women* of the paranormal), the film's aggressor and victim roles are almost wholly filled by females, with no males in sight powerful enough to be blamed. In different ways Tommy Ross, the Principal, Billy Nolan, the once-glimpsed Mr Snell, the spiteful English teacher, are all, in varying degrees vacillating and weak. Yet to read this as a systematic attempt to remove all evidence of male power from the film is oversimple, since it requires a wilfully blind reading to ignore the film's implications that its females are the constructions of the society in which they live, that the undoubted monstrousness of Chris in particular is the dark underside of a fantasy created by male desire and female collusion. A series of hints points to underlying structures: the jeering little boy on the bike who is the first of Carrie's victims; Billy Nolan describing a girl as 'a pig'; the desolate implications of Mrs Snell's afternoon drinking while watching a TV soap opera (in which a man seems to be accused of infidelity); Mrs White's obsession with her absent husband; the presiding icon of the film, Saint Sebastian; the shade of Norman Bates who, in a black joke, has given his name to the High School, and so on.

Like other literature and film of the Horror and Fantasy genres, *Carrie* does not wholly yield itself to the critic whose primary alignment is to criticism as a means to social change, since (as Jackson in part recognises[18]) there is something unregenerately subversive about the genres that is not wholly containable within a critique of bourgeois institutions. Though Freud is invoked by Wood, Britton and others in their positive readings, it is a renovated (one might say, castrated) Freud whose pessimism ('Man is a wolf to man') is forgotten. And one can observe in their essays in *The American Nightmare* a growing impatience with the Horror film's refusal to give up its pessimism and imagine a new society devoid of 'surplus repression'.[19] Yet if the Horror film refuses to envisage its own demise, to see the problems it deals with as solely the product

[20] 'John Ford's Young Mr Lincoln', *Cahiers du Cinema*, 223 (1970), reprinted in *Screen Reader 1*, London, Society — for Education in Film and Television, 1977, pp 116.

[21] ibid, p. 122.

[22] ibid, p 148.

[23] ibid, p 121.

[24] ibid, p 122.

[25] *The American Nightmare*, op cit, p 63.

of the bourgeois order, it still has much to say about the structures of that world. But this will not be available to critics who read films totally unhinged from the expectations and conventions of the genre, as if it were some kind of transparent naturalism that confronted them.

If genre is largely forgotten in the BFI Notes, the question of authorship is treated with both an extraordinary naiveté and hostility. Repressing any reference to contemporary reformulations of the authorial voice (or authorial sub-code) as it intersects with other determinants of the text, the Notes produce a parody auteurist position (p 1) as a gambit to render consideration of any kind of coherence in De Palma's *oeuvre* impossible (though the Notes (p 1) are also quite prepared to break their own rules and summon up *Dressed to Kill* as evidence for the misogyny argument).

The attempted critique that the Notes undertake descends ultimately from the famous 'rescanning' of *Young Mr Lincoln* by the editors of *Cahiers*. It is instructive to remember how much that influential piece, while it looked for 'structuring absences...the unsaid included in the said and necessary to its constitution'[20], insisted on Ford's place in the determinants of the film, speaking of 'the relatively autonomous aethetic processes...specific to Ford's writing'[21] and 'the Fordian fictional logic'[22], etc. Part 5 of the article scans the whole of Ford's work to seek out other manifestations of the character Lincoln.[23] In a regressive fashion the Notes have returned to the kind of criticism the *Cahiers* editors explicitly opposed, 'illusory deconstruction...through a reading of the demystificatory type' uninterested in the full range of specific interconnecting elements in the film.[24]

Again the reason for this is plain. In order to sustain the views that *Carrie* is misogynistic and incoherent, it is necessary to cut off discussion that might be embarrassing. For instance, though we might feel that Robin Wood exaggerates when he claims De Palma's *Blood Sisters* as the most radical feminist film since the '30s[25], even to air that claim would challenge the *Jump Cut* view of the film. If *Blood Sisters* can be read as so 'progressive', should we not think twice before condemning *Carrie*? Basically Bathrick's article and the BFI Notes accuse De Palma of simple sadistic voyeurism, but would the Notes be so confident if they considered *Carrie* in relation to the play with audience voyeurism at the beginning of *Blood Sisters* or if the opening sequence of *Carrie* was looked at alongside the critical use of the pornographic film-within-the-film in *Blow Out*?

Pleasure

Since, in the view of the Notes, the film's working on ideology needs no exploration, and since its narrative produces incoherence, one positive area alone remains for commentary. In spite of all that is wrong with it, *Carrie* is seen to give certain kinds of '*conscious* pleasures'... 'relatively autonomous from its ideological meanings', which make possible 'a

more positive assessment of De Palma's "effects", his "manipulation" of audiences, his control of performance . . . ' (p 3).

On the face of it this is more positive than what has gone before; the heterogeneity denied at all other points is at least allowed on purely formal matters. It accords too with the common experience of admiring, even being moved by, elements of cinematic art, while disapproving of aspects of the ideology of the same film. While some people see only an excessive mannerism in De Palma's films, for others he is certainly capable of great virtuosity.

The problem is that what seems to be a proper recognition of the heterogeneity of the film's effects, is in fact less innocent, since it becomes the last step in draining coherence and meaning from the text, with 'display', the source of pleasure, held in almost total opposition to meaning.

We have already seen how this dichtomy is enacted in the analysis of the volleyball shot which is allowed to signify in terms of formal patterns and relationships only when meaning has been drained from it. In another instance, the commentary (p 11) asks purely rhetorically 'why precisely' Carrie should be made to look like Alice in Wonderland? The answer to which is not a consideration of connotative possibilities around the thematic Woman/Child/Sexuality, but simply that it is 'a not necessarily unpleasurable stylistic arbitrariness'. Similarly, where the unease generated by the fact that Mrs White's beauty 'is conventionally at odds with the sexual loathing she expresses' is recognised by the Notes (p 11), the answer given is again in terms of stylistic arbitrariness with no concrete reference to the play of meanings available. Surely the astonishingly girllike, even childlike, quality of Piper Laurie's looks in this film is most strikingly exaggerated; a regressive characteristic (built on vocally as well) that plays across the Woman/Child/Sexuality thematics called up throughout.

Woman/child/ sexuality: Carrie as Alice in Wonderland.

But the most sustained attempt to convert all meaning to 'display' is in the treatment of the Prom, which accounts for 17 of the 57 slides. Here,

again and again, the comments that are made on De Palma's virtuosic formal devices (slow-motion, cross-cutting, etc.), in themselves often useful, also work to deny meaning in the crudest ways. The Notes themselves half recognise that they go too far. Thus the general comment to the Prom sequence is:

Here, although to some extent it can be argued that the range of issues raised elsewhere in the film are brought together and in some ways co-ordinated, this thematic consideration is over-ridden by a stylistic display offered as much in and for itself as for any meanings it might be deemed to carry. (p 12)

The language here is notably less sure – to its credit, I think. However, it fails to understand its own doubts: if, after the violent attempts to demote connotation and coherence, they still linger 'to some extent', 'in some ways', what would a reading less determined to repress them produce? Despite the critical conscience half activated here, the question asked (p 3) – 'aren't there dangers in setting up the potential opposition of *us* (who can see through the ideological operations of a film) and *them* (who cannot)?' – is merely cosmetic, since the Notes are uninterested in any reading but their own.

Meaningless display? The climax of the Prom sequence.
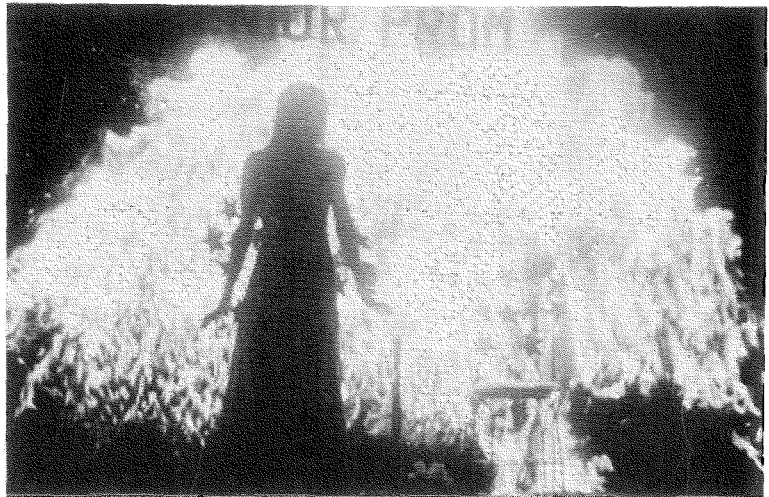
The whole discussion of 'display' in the Prom section is sustained by a largely unrealised contradiction. The project of the Notes has been to enter the film below its surface to reveal its real structural and ideological underpinnings. At almost every point they have attempted to render invalid any attempt by 'them' to make a coherence out of the film. Yet the argument about 'display' over meaning hinges on an unarticulated reversal of this procedure, privileging – as nowhere else – first-time audience response, 'the experience of watching the film', as the guarantor of truth about the text! It is not unjust to turn on the Notes the terms of their own critique and find them, more than the text, the triumph of 'display' over coherence.

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THE CURRICULUM, MEDIA STUDIES AND DISCURSIVITY.

A RECONSIDERATION OF EDUCATIONAL THEORY BY MANUEL ALVARADO AND BOB FERGUSON

I

[1] Peter Wollen, 'Manet: Modernism and Avant-Garde', *Screen* Summer 1980, vol 21 no 2, p 23. We are taking the liberty of 'quoting in transformation' (the words in-square brackets are the originals) because Bertolt Brecht was centrally concerned both with the problems of, and relationships between, realism, the real and the audience in the work of cultural production and analysis and also in learning and transformation — the areas with which this article is engaging.

Brecht described many times why a traditional form of realism was inade-quate as the sole or privileged form of oppositional pedagogy [art]. On a purely descriptive level it tended to be local rather than global, and to show what was present simultaneously rather than past and future. It favoured the actual rather than the possible and the observable rather than the unob-servable. It was descriptive rather than explanatory. It effaced contra-diction. It could not cope with the depiction of uneven development or over-determination. For this battery of reasons he tried to develop a pedagogy [art] on the basis of a montage of discourses dealing separately and in different manners with different areas and levels of reality. He also believed that the task of changing the structures of ideology (and society) was a common task, to be finished together by teacher [artist] and learner [spectator]. He therefore preferred open to closed education [works]. He believed that popular forms and conceptions should be used but also suspected.[1]

THE CONTENTION OF this article will be that the school curri-culum as we have inherited it and as it remains today, is essentially *realist* and that this fact represents the most important contributory factor (for ideological reasons) to the education system functioning as an agency of social control ensuring the reproduction of a class stratified, sexist, racist and ageist social formation. This will be argued to be the case because *realism* as dominantly conceived is ironically incapable of adequately handling, representing or analysing the complexities of the *real* in an active or productive way — of looking at the *real* as a dynamic, as process, as change.[2]

The article will be centrally concerned to try to re-think the organisa-tion and structure of the curriculum as a necessary prerequisite for the attempt to construct a pedagogy, both in terms of practice and know-ledge, more able to engage with the complexities of the world and its rep-resentation. In order to do this it will be argued that what is required is the development of a pedagogy:

[2] This is neither the time nor the context within which to engage with those who

... on the basis of a montage of discourses, dealing separately and in different manners with different areas and levels of reality.

It is within this project that it will also be argued that certain recent work which has been engaged with and developed in the general area of Film/TV/Media Studies has much to offer (and much to gain) for this process of re-conceptualisation.

II

... any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the power and knowledge they carry.[3]

There can be few people in our culture who, knowingly or not, are not concerned with educational curricula. Pupils, students, teachers, heads, local educational authorities (LEAs) obviously so; more generally so too are parents, employers, and those adults wishing to attend evening classes; and it is a matter of crucial concern to central government, the Department of Education and Science and those people interested in that complex nexus – the education system, the state and the social formation. Since the 1944 Education Act (interestingly, but not surprisingly, a document that does not offer either curricula guidelines or edicts) there have been a whole range of debates and books published about the curriculum. Academia has recognised it as a serious area of study and since 1976 it has achieved the status of meriting national, public, political debate. This last – the so-called Great Debate initiated by James Callaghan in his speech at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1976 – has achieved a certain culmination in the form of the publication of the DES document *The School Curriculum*[4] in 1981 which, for the first time, offers central government advice to educationalists on curriculum design.

One key question to ask is *who* determines and defines the curriculum as it dominantly exists in various forms through the education systems? Given the structure and history of the British education system this is a very difficult question to answer. Unlike the education systems of many other countries (take, for example, the rigid and highly centralised system of France) there are, given the differentials of power, a range of determinations which all the groups listed in the second sentence of this section could be seen to exert. Furthermore, much work on this question needs to be done; work which would embrace an analysis of pupil resistance (passive, and more recently, active) and student *protest*, school and LEA *innovation*, parent and employer *demands* and the whole host of subtle and not so subtle ways in which the DES 'encourages' *change* and *development* (and the italicised nouns immediately indicate specific power relations). On a separate and in some ways overarching trajectory, there are curriculum reformers, theorists and academics ranging from the work of people like A S Neill and Ivan Illich through people who teach academic courses in curriculum studies to academics who work in

argue that Marxism is a realism. We would, however, make one or two observations. Firstly, we are discussing the *dominantly conceived* notion of realism, which is, for those who agree with it, far from materialist. It is an unwritten realism which informs most educational practice and a great deal of educational theory. Its main components are a respect for empirical data (the facts) coupled with a common sense which in a particularly British way trusts itself to be beyond serious reproach. The most intellectually pernicious forms of such a realism manifest themselves in the practices of the teacher whose Anglo-centric world view is presented to pupils as the way things *are*.

[3] Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', in Robert Young (ed), *Untying the Text*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

[4] Department of Education and Science, *The School Curriculum*, March 1981.

5 Raymond
Williams, *The
Long Revolution*,
London, Chatto
and Windus, 1961.

those areas of study which have a particular interest in the curriculum (Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy of Education), all of whom contribute to the definitions of educational knowledge.

A closely related and equally crucial question to ask concerns the nature of the relationship between an education system and its containing culture – to what extent has a culture achieved the education system it desires in terms of reflecting and reproducing the social formation? A good deal of work has been published in this field over the last decade, eg the work of Althusser and Bourdieu in France, Bernstein, Young and Whitty et al and the new Open University course (*Society, Schooling and the State*) in Britain, Bowles and Gintis, Michael Apple in the United States. All have attempted to theorise this relationship and then engage in analyses of specific cultural systems which ultimately must have curricula implications.

In a different way Raymond Williams made a brief excursion into both these areas as the beginning of the sixties in his book *The Long Revolution*.[5] In a rarely discussed (judging by the lack of reference to it in educational writing) but important essay entitled 'Education and British Society', Williams offers a historical sketch of the British Education system and its relation to wider social, religious and political forces from the sixth century. He attempts to

> ... *see the changing complex of actual relations, in social training, subjects taught, definitions of general education, in the context of a developing society ... (which) will lead to an analysis of our own educational values and methods.*

This last objective leads him into offering for discussion an outline of a possible core curriculum. The irony of this essay's neglect is that in a context of much public debate and private fears (at least among many teachers) about the establishment of a 'core curriculum', Williams offered over twenty years ago a possible model which is still, for all its minimalism, the most interesting we have seen. And, given a number of factors in the current conjuncture which is Britain – the Great Debate and the 'back to basics' movement, a declining economy, increasing unemployment, the riots of summer 1981, educational cuts, *two* Department of Education and Science documents about the curriculum in a little over a year, to name some of the more obvious – there seems an increasing likelihood of the establishment of a core curriculum in the near future.

If we are correct in making this assessment then it follows that the curriculum could become the site of struggle, particularly among teachers, which will require careful preparatory analysis in order to construct a coherent strategy for action. One problem, for example, is that many teachers are opposed to the notion of the core curriculum because they do not want their apparent autonomy in the classroom to be eroded even further. There are also understandable and correct fears about who will devise the core curriculum and what form it will take. Furthermore, whoever devised it, even if some sort of collective policy could be

operated (involving all the different forces listed earlier), we fear that it would not end up looking very different to the dominant form of curriculum now in operation in this country. Even Raymond Williams' model, for all its sophistication and interest, could be characterised ungenerously as only adding 'practice in democratic procedures' to a fairly conventional listing with the 'fundamental languages of English and mathematics' taking pride of place.

The question which we want to pose in this article is whether it is possible to re-conceptualise and re-theorise the curriculum. We will do this by focusing on two different areas. The first deals with the nature of the relationship between the school curriculum and the 'real' world. Schematically Williams sets out three of the key elements here (without necessarily expressing approval):

...a child must be taught, first, the accepted behaviour and values of his society; second, the general knowledge and attitudes appropriate to an educated man, and third, a particular skill by which he will earn his living and contribute to the welfare of his society.[6]

This could be said to see education as essentially a process of socialisation. It is also a view which, with other (and often more idealistic) views, treats as unproblematic the way in which the society *presents* itself to the pupil through the schooling process. Or, to put it another way, Williams and all other educational writers we know, do not raise the question of the way in which the world is *represented* to the pupil. (The 'new' sociologists of education began to raise some of these issues in the early seventies when they questioned the concept of knowledge but they were concerned with 'construction' and not 'representation' which has important implications as we shall see later.)

The second area to be examined will be that which is variously designated Film/TV/Media Studies, in order to indicate why it offers the possibility of fundamentally re-thinking the curriculum. We will take this first.

III

... in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.[7]

Despite the fact that the development of the study of the Media (which term we will use from now on to encompass Film and Television) can be seen as one which was primarily concerned with questions of the construction of a body of knowledge – and, in the case of the few institutions which actually taught it, with matters of syllabus organisation – the problem of curricula was always there. The emphases and oscillations of opinion that took place from the early fifties have been varied and a more

[6] ibid.

[7] Michel Foucault, op cit.

[8] Paddy Whannel, 'Servicing the Teacher', *Screen* vol 11 no 4/5, 1970, pp 48-55.

[9] Richard Collins, 'Media Studies – Alternative or Oppositional Practice', in Geoff Whitty and Michael Young, *Explorations in the Politics of School Knowledge*, Nafferton, 1976.

[10] Jean-Pierre Golay, 'Introduction to the Language of Image and Sound', *Screen Education Notes* 1 Winter 1971; see Susan Bennett, 'Media Studies in France', *Screen Education* no 18, Spring 1976, for a brief account of the work of the teachers in Bordeaux.

[11] See the work of Christian Metz generally. For Guy Gauthier see his paper 'Introduction to the Semiology of the Image' available from the Education Department of the BFI.

[12] See 'Editorial', *Screen Education* no 13, Winter 1974/75.

precise outline of the major strands could be offered (criticism vs practice, appreciation vs analysis, secondary vs higher etc) but one of the main problems which had to be confronted at the beginning of the seventies was whether or not to argue for the 'institutionalisation' of this new subject area. Opponents argued that this would have the effect of reifying the subject into just another area of the curriculum alongside English, preventing the hoped for radical potential of Media Studies from challenging the dominant formations of knowledge. Furthermore it was felt that making the subject examinable (the next stage) would ossify it, rendering its syllabuses rigid and difficult to change. Much as this argument seemed to have going for it there seems to us now an essential purism about it – as if there is such a thing as radical knowledge which mustn't be tainted by Western capitalist educational institutions.

Those who favoured the introduction of Media Studies into the curriculum argued that it was ridiculous that the major social, political and cultural form of communication in twentieth century civilisation should be ignored by a curriculum inherited from a nineteenth century education system. Furthermore, the position ran, until the area was examined at university level, it was going to be very difficult (impossible) to obtain the funding necessary to mount such courses or to engage in much needed research work.[8] For a variety of reasons this last argument eventually prevailed. It was this fact which led to another set of problems: having decided to introduce a new subject area, how did one avoid simply modernising the curriculum? Important here is Richard Collins' essay 'Media Studies – Alternative or Oppositional Practice?'[9] Was it possible to both introduce a new subject area and at the same time question and contest dominant forms of knowledge?

Over the same period another strand in the development of study of the media can be discerned at the extreme ends of the body of knowledge so far established. At the primary educational level there was the work of Jean-Pierre Golay and some of the Bordeaux educationalists,[10] and at the higher education level advanced semiotic work exemplified by that of Christian Metz and Guy Gauthier[11] which, using structural linguistics as a model, attempted to construct a precise method which would enable analysis of the 'language of image and sound'. Partly on the basis of this work the possibility was advanced of introducing the notion of *visual literacy*[12] into the curriculum (instead of Film and TV Studies) as a core element to take its place alongside the other core elements of literacy, verbal literary and numeracy. In consequence, the concept of a 'core curriculum' becomes of crucial tactical importance to teachers entering the argument about the location of media studies.

In this article we will not engage in further arguments about the areas listed above (although they would all merit it) but rather use the problems teaching these core areas have exposed as a way of rethinking the curriculum. One beginning is to ask what the study of the media has introduced in terms of fundamentally new understandings of the world? Obviously, in those apocalyptic terms, nothing. However, it has provided a site for the intersection of a unique combination of theoretical

and political elements. Perhaps the question should be reformulated along the lines of 'What has that combination of elements achieved in terms of enabling us to re-think the media, media education and the curriculum in general?'

IV

... discourse is the power which is to be seized.[13]

Fundamentally, study of the media has enabled us to develop further our understanding of what for centuries was largely an aesthetic problem – Realism. The insistence of Media Studies is that the media never *present* the 'real' world but rather offer a *representation* of it and in order to understand this process one needs to analyse the media as *specific signifying practices*. Thus what the media not only *use* but also *offer* and constitute is a *symbolic system* for our processes of understanding (rather than for our direct understanding of *the world*).

The other element which has been crucial to development of the study of the media has been that of *institutions*, under the particular influence of the work of Michel Foucault. The notions of institutional practices and formations and of institutional struggle are essentially missing from the academic disciplines. To combine a *theory* of institutions with a *theory* of symbolic systems and specific signifying systems is to engage in a radically different area of work and to operate with a radically different set of questions – those that have come to be encompassed under the headings of *Discourse Theory* or *Theories of Discursivity*.[14]

What has this got to do with the curriculum or with the presence (or otherwise) of Media Studies on it, especially as the two possible entry points of Media Studies into the curriculum interestingly exemplify Michael Young's binary opposition of the 'Curriculum as Fact' and the 'Curriculum as Process'?[15] One way of answering this question is to look at the other areas of the curriculum. If, for example, we look at history and its recent development, we discover the term *historiography*.[16] We would suggest that not only is it historiography that we should be teaching in schools rather than history *but* that historiography is what *is* being taught – implicitly, and not explicitly as such a discipline itself requires. That is, one should reveal that it is not the 'real world' that is being taught about in history lessons but rather a discourse (or, if you are lucky, discourse*s*) about the world – a *representation* of the world that is 'historical' – that which belongs to discourses which can be institutionally specified and analysed. And the same could be argued for *all* other subject areas/academic disciplines: they all offer representations of the world, discourses (usually educational) about the world and never (because it is impossible) the world itself. However, this is denied by the curriculum as it is currently conceived and constituted, for it is based on an essentially 'realist', ie empiricist, pragmatic and utilitarian, conception of both knowledge and the world. The 'new' sociologists recognised

[13] Michael Foucault, op cit.

[14] Discourse theory is concerned with the modes of distribution of possible statements across lines of social difference; the elaboration of the statements into discourses which in turn function institutionally to maintain difference; the function of subjects in relation to institutions and the stifling relations of power which validate knowledge and ultimately make utterance possible in specific situations. The notion of discursive formations is also crucial, highlighting the absence of any straightforward structural correspondences between institutions and discourses.

[15] Michael Young, 'Curriculum Change: Limits and Possibilities', in Michael Young and Geoff Whitty (eds), *Society, State and Schooling*, Falmer, 1977. One problem with this opposition – which can be directly linked with the traditional/progressive or even the more sophisticated

Bernsteinian explicit/implicit hierarchies – is that nobody seems to be able to get outside or beyond it. Fundamentally that is what is being attempted in this article.

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[16] A selection of texts constructing various discourses in history might include A Marwick, *The Nature of History*, Macmillan, 1979; E H Carr, *What Is History?*, Penguin, 1978; E P Thompson, *The Poverty of History*, Merlin, 1978; P Anderson, *Arguments within* English Marxism, Verso 1980; G Stedman Jones, 'History: the Poverty of Empiricism', in *Ideology in Social Science*, edited by R Blackburn, Fontana 1978.

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[17] Michael Young, 'Curriculum Change; Limits and Possibilities', op cit.

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[18] See especially Michael Young (ed), *Knowledge and Control*, Collier-Macmillan, 1971.

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[19] Nell Keddie, 'Classroom Knowledge', in Young, op cit; Nell Keddie, *Tinker, Tailor...* the Myth of Cultural

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this fact but did not have the theoretical tools at hand to solve the problem and hence they fell into a relativist trap, of treating all knowledge as equally valid.

Nevertheless the major and most significant recent change of direction in 'thinking' the curriculum was the writing of the 'New Sociologists' in the seventies. They enjoyed a brief but influential period when approaches to the curriculum were revitalised and there was an attempt to break away from 'the mindless banalities of curriculum taxonomies'.[17] M F D Young was one of the more prominent sociologists associated with this group.[18] The work of Nell Keddie was also influential.[19] But the problem was that although their work did rock the rather tawdry foundations of curriculum theory and remove some of the complacency with which it had been handled, there was then little to put in its place. It is true that writers like Young did think their position through to the (bitter)end, but this end was unfortunately very near to a silence of desperation. The strength of Young's challenge to the curricular status quo is well summed up in his paper given as a Doris Lee Memorial Lecture on February 20, 1975, and entitled 'Curriculum Change: limits and possibilities.'[20] It is to this paper that we now turn in order to explicate both the strengths and weaknesses of the 'New Sociologists' and to argue towards a more fundamental reconceptualisation of the curriculum.

Young distinguishes two main approaches to the curriculum. The first he associates with educational thinkers such as Hirst and Peters and designates 'curriculum as fact'.[21] The second is a phenomenologically-oriented approach which Young links with thinkers such as Freire and designates 'curriculum as practice'.[22] The former approach is seen by Young as 'mystifying in the way it presents the curriculum as having a life of its own and obscures the human relations in which it, as an conception of knowledge, is embedded'. 'Curriculum as practice' can also mystify according to Young, 'to the extent that it reduces the social reality of "curriculum" to the subjective intentions and actions of teachers and pupils.'

Young rightly points out that most writers and researchers who deal with the 'curriculum as fact' approach, treat it in some way as a topic. It is an *object* in need of constant updating and modification with an a-critical notion of 'relevance' at its heart. It has also moved away from a concern for pupils and students to a consideration of *itself*. It is worth noting here that if such a consideration had enjoyed the critical base associated with the Frankfurt School thinkers it might have been what Professor Peters would call a 'worthwhile activity', instead of becoming a means of sustaining journals, departments, teachers and above all the status quo. The main thrust of Young's arguments against 'curriculum as fact' are directed at the language of curriculum theory which masks or subsumes the social relations between teachers and taught and the assumptions about knowledge and curriculum embedded in them.

Young then cites the work of Nell Keddie in order to draw attention to the relationship between becoming an educational success and *not* questioning 'the grounds of teachers' knowledge'. The critique which is being

mounted is directed against the unproblematic acceptance of teaching as 'knowledge to be transmitted'. There is a lucid outline of the dilemma faced by both teacher and taught between curricular *integration* as an *involving* process, or as a process of ordering the world through which the learner has to find her/his way. These arguments lead Young to the question of power relations between teacher and taught. The argument is not developed along the lines of knowledge 'being' power, but rather in relation to the preferred or chosen knowledge which can be put forward by teachers because of *their* power relationship with the taught. 'Curriculum as fact' fails, according to Young, because it does not enable people to become aware of ways of changing the world.

The next section of Young's paper deals with the premises of 'curriculum as practice' which he describes as 'not a structure of knowledge, but how men (sic) collectively attempt to order their world and in the process produce knowledge'.[23] Knowledge production becomes a collaborative venture between teachers and pupils. But for Young the curriculum is not the practice (or business) of *only* teachers and pupils, but also involves the views of parents, employers and administrators about what education should be. There is a clear sympathy on Young's part for the notion of 'curriculum as practice', particularly where it is concerned to 'challenge attempts to legitimate particular educational practice in terms of structures of knowledge'.[24] But he is well aware that substituting teachers' classroom practice for notions of reality located in structures of knowledge also brings with it serious weaknesses. At this point he identifies the main issue as the need for teachers to become aware of the limits on the possibilities for action and the limits of 'a theory that cannot comprehend the character of such limits'.[25]

Young's aim is to transform educational practice. He sees the prevailing hierarchies of knowledge as very conventionalised. What he has to say about a theory for change in education is worth quoting in full:

A theory that can provide for possibilities of change in education does not emerge either from the dominant view of 'curriculum as fact' or from a critique of such a view expressed in the idea of curriculum as practice. The first, by starting from a view of knowledge abstracted from men in history and from the teachers and pupils to whom it is addressed, denies the possibilities except within its framework and definitions. The second, in its concern to recognise teacher and pupils as conscious agents of change, as theorists in their own right, and to emphasise the human possibilities in all situations, has also become abstracted from the constraints of teachers' lived experience. Possibilities may be recognised in **theory,** *but their practical implementation is experienced as something quite remote. A* **theoretical critique** *of the necessity of hierarchies of knowledge and ability may be exciting in a seminar but is not any good to those who experience such necessities as real in practice. The problem then is not to deny or accept these hierarchies as necessary, but to try and reformulate them as not in the order of things but as the outcomes of the collective actions of men — and thus understandable and potentially changeable.*[26]

[27] James Donald, 'Green Paper: Noise of Crisis', *Screen Education* no 30, Spring 1979, pp 13-49.

[28] ibid, pp 16-17.

Young then draws his paper to a conclusion by outlining 'three directions in which I see a critical theory which transcends the dichotomy of "fact" and practice will need to develop'. Briefly, they are as follows:

1. A *practical* change in relations is needed between those currently known as theorists and those about whom they theorise. Any theory must be transformable into action in the practice of teachers and pupils.

2. A more adequate theory of curriculum as *practice* would have to extend beyond the practices of teacher and taught inside the classroom to 'involve many others who have no direct involvement with the school'. Much action by teachers and pupils would occur which 'would not be seen as either confined to the school or necessarily educational at all'.

3. The political and economic character of education should not be obscured. Nor should the fact that 'transcending the limits within which we work' has been produced 'through the conflicting actions and interests of men in history'. Much can also be learned about parental involvement from a study of Trades Councils and local School Boards at the turn of the century.

These arguments raised in Young's paper in no sense encompass the diversity and depth of thought which can be found throughout the rest of his work. To attempt to praise what we believe to be valuable in it is not our purpose. It *is* our contention, however, that Young's train of thought does represent an essential struggle with the dominent discourses about the curriculum, though we would not agree with his conclusions. James Donald has developed a critique of Young's position[27] (as it was perceived in 1979) with which we would generally concur. Briefly, Donald's argument runs as follows:

The main emphasis of the New Sociologists of education, outside of specific analyses of the operation and implementation of the curriculum, was on the crucial importance of human agency in the move towards radical social change. This could occasionally degenerate into forms of workerism. In general terms, *human agency* was conceived as the blood coursing unproblematically through the veins of class struggle. Donald pointed out that it could not, however, be used as an unexamined explanatory category:

Human agency is something that has itself to be explained, and the way to do that is by examining the processes and struggles which produce both the power-knowledge relation and a position within it for the human agent, a position which sustains the relation. Agency can only be understood (and changed) if it is conceived not just as the source of social change, but above all as an effect of particular social and institutional practices.[28]

It is our intention now to refer specifically to several of the points made by Young in his paper on curriculum change. The first point relates to the concept of knowledge, which, to draw upon Freire, needs to be re-problematised. Not that it has ever been other than problematic, for the dictionary definition of the word encompasses both a dynamic process of knowing and a much more static notion of the acquisition through

study of a body of facts. Both these definitions precisely miss the point that for knowledge to be of use it has to be constructed or framed within a specific discourse. Whether static or dynamic, 'factual' or 'experiential' knowledge can only be put to work by being used within a discourse. There is no course of action open to communicating human beings that does not require the erection of fields of discourse, whether it is structural functionalism or phatic speech at a bus stop. Meaning and discourse in this sense are virtually synonymous. The acquisition of knowledge is a necessary pre-requisite for the establishment of discourses and can only be acquired through discourse. The two are inseparable, yet the latter is always the dominant. In its static form, the same 'knowledge' can be used in different discourses to lead to radically different conclusions. Young's emphasis is on preferred or chosen 'knowledge' put forward by teachers from a dominating power relationship with those whom they teach. His implication is clearly that the teachers are providing stratified forms of knowledge which serve to perpetuate a class-stratified social formation. There is also a notion in what Young says that if the 'right' kind of knowledge was provided, things could improve for the working class student.

Our emphasis is somewhat different. We would also argue that teachers do stand in a powerful position in relation to those who are taught. What they teach, however, is not knowledge. It is *preferred discourses*. These are not necessarily chosen by the teacher, nor must the teacher necessarily be aware of what is taking place. There are a whole host of factors which can serve to mask the nature of a specific discourse. These may vary from the requirements of the 'O' level syllabus to the 'naturalness' of the bourgeois-liberal approach to education. An example would be the classic approach to the causes of the First World War which manages to avoid any reference to the concept of *imperialism*, but discusses the quite 'natural' competition between powerful nations. The teacher's task should be to *de*naturalise various discourses rather than to endlessly validate them by a complicity with the unspoken norms of a powerful ideological state apparatus.

Serious consideration must also be given to the issue of power. Though it may be possible to modify the power relationship between teacher and student in significant ways, it will not disappear. This is true in forms of collaborative learning when the teacher poses as an equal or an elder friend. It is also true in the more traditional forms of teaching. These forms of power must be eroded to the point of accepting that the teacher has a vital and specialised role to play within a greatly democratised system of education. But that role will require the teacher to be much more than a wise companion or a dictatorial pedant. It will require a recognition of the crucial importance of the power-knowledge relationship discussed by Foucault[29] and the will to work towards the possession of power as a goal of education. In this sense state education will become the mirror image of the private sector which works to perpetuate the power relationship of the capitalist class to the working class. State education will be concerned to pass power to the proletariat. The natur-

[29] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, pp 27-28.

30 An interesting and contrasting, though very uneven, piece by Wexer draws attention to the importance of semiotics for educational development. The emphasis is on the positive aspects of an ahistorical approach in order to better develop class consciousness: 'Ironically, an ahistorical semiotics leads us towards class consciousness through an emphasis on the internal practices of textual production, while a representational commitment to class consciousness leads us towards it denial in reification.' P Wexer, 'Structure, Text and Subject: a Critical Sociology of School Knowledge', in M Apple (ed), *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p 290.

31 Young is apparently using the word 'abstracted' here to signify 'divorced from'.

alisation of school knowledge via preferred discourse needs to be shattered by the identification of other discourses and the intellectual rigour with which both teacher and taught pursue the investigation. In a strictly educational sense the preferred discourse has nothing to fear but the power or weakness of its premises and the acceptability of its intellectual and hence practical consequences. The terrain upon which education is conducted must become an intellectual battlefield rather than a consensual swamp. The fundamental issue which state education faces is not which knowledge to teach but which discourses to construct from the ruins of post-war social democracy.

Young's arguments at no time lead him towards a consideration of discourse or fields of discourse. He does refer to the abstracted knowledge associated by him with 'curriculum as fact' which he says denies any possibility of change 'except within its own framework and definitions'. It would seem from what he writes that Young does not see all knowledge as an abstraction. Yet we would argue that it is only by accepting knowledge as an abstraction that the possibility emerges of restructuring abstractions in order that they make take on a different meaning which is inextricably linked with *practice* via the necessary utilisation of specific discourses.

Young does refer to a view of knowledge 'abstracted from men *in history*'[30] (our italics) but the thrust of his argument is towards a concept of abstraction which is potentially deadening rather than a *necessary* prerequisite for theory to be constructed. Indeed Young goes further and suggests that other theories which are concerned with 'teachers and pupils as conscious agents of change' and which emphasise 'the human possibilities in all situations', have become 'abstracted from the constraints of the teachers' lived experience'.[31] Which just goes to show, as far as we are concerned, that they were pretty poor theories! The sort of educational theories which are necessary are those which recognise abstraction and which are precisely aware of the constraints of lived experience. They will not be theories which change, mould themselves, gel or mesh with the constraints of lived experience as a prerequisite for consideration. They will precisely be theories articulated through discourses which require the radical changing of our understanding of lived experience. The recognition of such discourses and the implementation of critical activities will be the first step in an educational context towards such change.

Young, it would seem, has been left frustrated at the aridity of ahistorical theoretical abstraction on the one hand and abstraction from lived experience (is there any other?) in theories concerned with 'human possibilities' on the other. And in a sense the new sociology of education has sought an immediate set of results from theory. Such an objective ignores the necessary intermediate stages with which education has to grapple and which are concerned with laying the intellectual foundations, the premises and strategies for the taking of action. These intermediate stages do not preclude an involvement with day to day political activity. Indeed they should inform and enrich such activity. But it is

only by developing a sustained and informed understanding of the intellectual fields of discourse which constitute the framework of the material base of ideology that school students can hope to continue any intellectual and practical engagement with social structures and relations of productions which goes beyond the frustrations caused by the difficulties of instituting immediate and radical social change.

We wish to argue that there *are* distinct ways in which the curriculum can be reconceptualised and that this will lead to a concern with modes of representation. Dominant modes of representation in education take place through the establishment of various discourses which rely upon a *limited* knowledge in order to accomplish their ideological purpose. So the curriculum must also be concerned with *increased* knowledge acquisition, built around the development of theoretical understanding and discourse analysis. It is our contention that the area variously designated Film/TV/Media Studies provides a crucial focus for the reconceptualisation of the curriculum so far discussed.

V

Discourse is not about objects: rather, discourse constitutes them.[32]

Discourse theory offers a possible way of thinking all subject areas as never presenting the world but always offering a representation of it. This suggestion has a number of implications for the current curriculum and current theories of education. Firstly it transforms the obvious and common sense wisdom of English and Maths forming the central core of the curriculum (much as we are committed to the central importance of all members of society being literate and numerate). Instead the core of the curriculum would consist neither of a set of facts nor a series of processes but rather of a recognition of the fundamental notion of *symbolic systems*. This would involve the understanding that *all* experience is constituted *by, through* and *in relation to* a range of symbolic systems and discursive practices. It also means that having established this general principle *it is symbolic systems and discursive practises that would be taught*. Deriving out of them would be an engagement with all (or as many as feasible) of the areas of 'knowledge'. Pupils would be offered a theoretical base and structure upon which to build their understanding of the complexities of the world as opposed to empirical accounts (which includes the discovery-based methods by which we 'learn' to be children as well as learn English, Maths, foreign languages etc).

Some will suggest that such a curriculum would operate at a level of abstraction and theory isolated from the 'real' world. Within the commonsense notion of what counts as knowledge, learning, education, and the forms in which it is transmitted, one finds far deeper levels of abstraction. Discourse theory is characterised by an explicitness which the complexity of the hidden and frequently unrecognised codes that operate within commonsense elide/deny/ignore. Indeed it works expli-

[32] Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, London, Tavistock, 1980.

citly to define and identify these codes. It must also be remembered that *as a practice*, discourse analysis is precisely and consistently concerned with *detail* involving rigorous empirical research (see Foucault throughout!). How much difference is there at this level from the theories of Bishop Berkeley or of the new sociologists? It is at this point that we wish to return to the first of our two areas of engagement – the question of the relationship between the education system and the 'real' world.

It seems to us that the school curriculum is fundamentally based on a 'realist' conception of the world – it appears to present it in a direct and unmediated fashion. The operations of school knowledge are essentially transparent and unproblematic. On the other hand the real world rarely appears. The logic of school organisation, rules, curricula, extra curricular activities, holidays, homework, punishment etc is to insist on the separation of school from the 'real' world. The world of the family has to be negotiated (through letters, parents' evenings, PTAs) and the world of work is usually beyond and outside. Ironically, it is precisely through the presentation of the curriculum as transparent and non-problematic, combined with its distancing from the world outside the school, that students are prepared to enter the very real conditions guaranteed by the present social relations of production.

If one starts from the proposition (and position) that we all accept as a philosophic and materialist principle that the world exists – and that we all 'experience' it whether from the position of the relative comfort of the First World or from the dire poverty of most of the Third World – then the central question becomes *how* we make sense of/understand the world. Education has been crucial here in offering definitions, accounts, conceptualisations, answers to our experiences of the world while at the same time refusing to recognise the complexities of the relationship between experience and how to think about/through experience. And individual or small scale contestations of that relationship (and we are not offering an account which does not recognise the very important contestations that have been made by women, the working class, blacks) are easily refused by the laws of the academy.

If we therefore start with the proposition that the real world exists totally and all-embracingly but that we understand it *through* discursive and symbolic systems and practices we have a basis on which to construct the core curriculum. It means that in schools (and the other areas of the education system) people will be learning about different ways the world is represented and also about the political, ideological, social cultural, economic, aesthetic systems and positions embedded within those representations. In that process they will be learning about the relations of *power* – in fact we would go so far as to argue that that is the *only* way they will learn about the relations of power within a social formation. As Williams implicitly indicates, the curriculum is not an innocent formation.

Education is not a matter of:
a) telling us that a river exists – we are prepared to accept that;
b) telling us what grows on it;

c) telling us who cultivates it;

d) telling us who used to cultivate it;

e) telling us what it yields per annum;

f) telling us who makes the profits from what it yields;

g) telling us what flora and fauna live within it;

h) telling us what hydro-electric schemes could be developed on it;

i) telling us what its military significance and value is;

j) telling us etc, etc, etc.

Telling us of all these things could be of value and importance – we are not denying that. Nor are we denying that an understanding of the relationship of that total ensemble of information could be both critically important in all sorts of ways and also make us knowledgeable persons with marketable skills (not an insignificant consideration at present). What we are saying is that all the academic and intellectual disciplines – discourses – that are required to provide that information (geography, agriculture, politics, history, economics, political economy, biology, engineering, technology and science, international relations etc) treat as self evident and unproblematic their representation of the river. And therefore to understand what each of these disciplines offers us we need to understand the symbolic systems through which, and by which, they are variously constituted. Otherwise, we can only respond to their respective 'knowledges' in the most naive and simplistic of terms.

We wrote earlier that in our opinion media studies and the 'disciplines' which have contributed to the area's formation have been significant in relation to certain transformations taking place within more traditional disciplines. Furthermore we have argued in this article that the development of certain intellectual fields of enquiry – and in particular those which tend to come under the heading of discourse theory – offer the possibility of re-thinking the structure and function of the curriculum as conceived and theorised within late twentieth century educational practice. But if the curriculum is conceptually and theoretically re-thought and re-structured we still have to return to the question of its implications for the media studies teacher.

In debates about what constitutes and what is constituted by media studies a number of elements will be listed by teachers in the field. These are likely to include areas such as production, technology, finance, institutional structures, marketing, distribution, exhibition, reception/consumption; and critical notions such as modes and relations of production, realism, narrative, representation, signification, reading, ideology, subjectivity, authorship, genre, 'effects' etc. All these elements are likely to be handled in separation, reinforcing their separateness, within the traditional curriculum and there are powerful arguments for the educational activity being precisely about the necessity of delimiting areas for, and of, investigation.

If one function of the critical and analytical activity is to understand the complex inter-relationship and the complex levels of cross determination of cultural artefacts, then we assume that this too is a goal of the educational process. We do not mean by this however, that all the ele-

[33] Len Masterman, *Teaching About Television*, London, Macmillan, 1980.

ments listed above should be blurred into each other – rather as the label 'Humanities' for example, came to stand for a loose amalgam of disparate subject areas lacking theoretical coherence or tension – but rather that the different areas should be brought into an engagement where they would be used to interrogate each other constantly.

For example, if one simplifies and reduces their number to the encapsulating formula – production, circulation, consumption – all three areas need to be kept constantly in critical play within the analytical *and* educational process. Thus the separation argued for by Len Masterman in his book *Teaching About Television*[33] between teaching about the structures of broadcasting on the one hand and 'reading' the television 'text' on the other is a false one. And to assert that is not to say simply that one should teach both – we are not arguing for a more 'complete' and 'comprehensive' syllabus and curriculum. The institutions of broadcasting and of the social formation generally are *inscribed* within the very processes of circulation and consumption of media artefacts – and within the operation and codes of the texts themselves; further, these inscriptions are complexly and reciprocally embedded. Crudely:
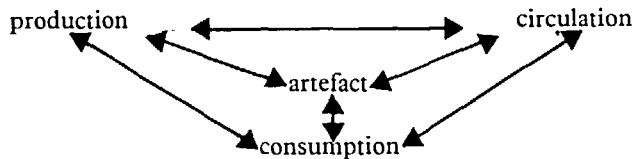
Such an understanding, *not* of the relationship between these areas (as the diagram unfortunately suggests) but of their inscription within each other, is not to argue for a deterministic, normative and fatalistic model. It is to argue that the recognition of the deeply embedded nature of all the practices – social, economic, cultural, political, aesthetic – that exist within, and constitute, a cultural artefact is a crucial step towards a more adequate criticism and education. The next step is to devise critical tools for exposing these inscriptions; critical strategies for analysing the nature and function of their existence; and criteria for assessing their significance.

We already know that media artefacts are not a homogeneous and unified body of objects within a social formation. What we need to know more about is how to teach oppositionally with those artefacts which are unquestioningly inscribed within the dominant ideology, and to recognise and use the oppositional potential of those artefacts which offer resistances to their own existence and inscriptions. We also need educational and pedagogical practices which are part of this project. Both possibilities, we contend, are opened up by and through notions of discourse and discursivity.

TEACHING TELEVISION
TONY PEARSON REPORTS
ON DEGREE COURSE DEVELOPMENTS
AT- GLASGOW UNIVERSITY

The final issues of *Screen Education*, before its merger last year with *Screen*, followed closely the journal's declared project of facilitating lively discussion of the special problems and challenges facing teachers of the media at various points within the educational spectrum. Issue 38 (Spring 1981) in particular was specifically formulated to consider pedagogical practices and problems, reflecting upon actual classroom experiences as well as offering more theoretical pieces. The new journal's commitment to education will clearly take a variety of forms in a number of areas, but one of these should be the circulation of information about what teachers in different educational environments are actually doing. If this paper, therefore, were to inspire or provoke others to enter the debate with accounts of their particular teaching practices and problems in subsequent issues, I would certainly consider the agony of reflecting upon my own worthwhile. We are all aware that interesting developments are under way in *other* educational establishments, but we are rarely in possession of the kind of prosaic detail that might cause us to re-examine the reasoning behind our own working practices.

Despite the relative abundance of recent work on education, it is not difficult to find some sympathy with Judith Williamson's feeling that 'teaching in *Screen Education* is like sex – you know other people do it, but you never know exactly what they do or *how* they do it.' [1] This

article will be specifically concerned with the business of teaching television studies to degree level students. I am less interested in proposing a fixed theoretical framework than in attempting to repair the omission in recent coverage on media pedagogics, including that of *Screen Education*, of any description of what actually goes on in developing a coherent television course within an university or similar institution.

A great deal of the available writing on the teaching of media studies has, like Len Masterman's influential *Teaching about Television*,[2] been addressed to the secondary school situation, while the Film and Television curriculum of universities and other degree awarding institutions has received far less attention. John Ellis, however, has argued persuasively for the potential of film studies in Higher Education to challenge the formation of what he calls the traditional literary intellectual.[3] The challenge derives from, among other things, the specific tendency of film studies to demand a consolidation of disciplines, a bringing together of 'major concerns from a series of disciplines which usually maintain themselves as largely separate'.[4] At the same time, a disruption within more traditional disciplines is likely to occur when such a consolidation takes place. Thus, film studies' need to concentrate, *inter alia*, on industrial and institutional concerns as an

[1] Judith Williamson, 'How Does Girl Number Twenty Understand Ideology?' *Screen Education* no 40, Autumn/Winter 1981/2, p 83.

[2] Len Masterman, *Teaching About Television*, Macmillan, 1980.
[3] John Ellis, 'Film in Higher Education', *Screen Education* no 38, Spring 1981, pp 32-40.
[4] ibid.

integral part of the textual process can pose difficulties for subjects that have usually ignored such an approach in favour of celebrating the written text itself as paramount.

While associating myself strongly with John Ellis' position on the specificity of teaching film within Higher Education, and extending the formula to embrace TV studies, I am concerned here to describe one particular practical elaboration of that position which refers to the notion of television as an *institutionally* mediated form. More specifically, to express the television side of the equation, I now want to set forth some details of recent experiences within Film and Television Studies at Glasgow University of teaching about the structures and content of television. In particular I shall be describing a course taught during 1981/82 under the title': 'Institutional Issues – Audience and Censorship'. This is not being put forward in any way as an ideal model for teaching about the institutional restraints at work in British television – the course will inevitably look different when tried the next time – but is intended both as a contribution to the continuing debate around the important issue of censorship and as a response to the marked reluctance to reveal what and how one teaches.

Television Studies at Glasgow

In order to set the course on television censorship in its proper context, it is first of all necessary to say a little about Film and Television Studies at Glasgow University. This was initially established as a one-year course which could be taken as a graduating component of the Glasgow 'Ordinary' Degree. Alternatively, it could (and can) be studied in the early career of a student going on to read Honours in other subjects, which would most typically be English, Drama, Fine Art or Sociology. The appointment by the University of a full-time lecturer in Film and TV Studies with effect from 1979 made it possible to offer a full two-year course, allowing students to study Film and TV Studies as a relatively major component of their degree.

The first year class spends two terms gaining an introduction to film with a weekly screening around which the lectures or seminars for that week are centred; the third, somewhat shorter, term is devoted entirely to television. The

separation of television from film at this stage is not a reflection of the perceived status of either, but is determined partly by limited staff resources and partly by the conviction that a grounding in the basics of film theory and criticism and the crucial recognition of film as an industrial construct, are useful prerequisites to the television section of the course which concentrates on institutional structures. The material covered during the year is intended as a body of study in itself for those who will not be taking their Film and Television work any further, as well as a springboard for those who will move on to more intensive study in the second year.

The first year course's television section consists essentially of an introduction to television institutions, and to the popular programming categories of soap opera and crime series. We investigate particularly the different financial and organisational structures of the two broadcasting authorities and the ITV network, the fundamental provisions of the Charter and Act, the notion of accountability and relations with Government and the effects of the breaking of the public service monopoly. Along the way we inevitably examine the impact on content and 'flow' of such issues as advertising, ratings, scheduling and the practitioners' concept of the audience. There might also be a brief introduction to the question of censorship in the shape of a discussion of the in-house referral practices that appear to operate as a control within the television companies, especially in the sphere of drama.

The predominantly factual character of this material, coupled with the fact that the course roll usually numbers between 70 and 100, means that the lecture format can hardly be avoided as the most efficient means of transmission. However, sandwiched between the two lectures each week is a one-and-a-half hour session consisting of a short videotape screening followed by a detailed analysis in which students are encouraged to participate. This session, which is the counterpart of the weekly film analysis class, typically invites the class to confront the ways in which the medium employs its own specific signifying practices to construct stories, dramas, meanings, representations, etc. To illustrate these points we might conduct an analysis of a popular programme along the lines of Heath and Skirrow's analysis of a *World in*

Action on truancy[5] and ask the class to consider the material as a product of the industrial/institutional base that the lectures have been describing.

The Second Year Course

In the second year class in Film and Television Studies, television is studied alongside film instead of as a slightly separate entity. In 1981/82 three hours per week (plus a film screening) were devoted to film, while there was a regular one-hour class each week in television. This was increased as appropriate to accommodate screenings, especially in the second term when the emphasis was on television drama. Students were given an introduction to television studio equipment early in the course and could later opt to participate in a studio-based TV project or, alternatively, could work in small groups on short 8mm films. A certain amount of time in the third term was set aside for these practical activities.

On the film side, the course was concerned with a number of critical and institutional issues as they have developed in relation to the cinema in France, Britain and the United States. These issues included, more specifically: film and politics in the work of Renoir; authorship and genre in popular American cinema as encountered in the work of Ford and in *film noir*; British cinema industry and the tradition of British post-war realism; documentary, independent cinema and the avant-garde in Britain.

The television course with which I am concerned here, 'Institutional Issues – Audience and Censorship', set itself the task of expanding and complicating with a more specialised attention the introductory survey of television structures undertaken in the first-year course. Additionally, the term's work was intended to go some way towards proposing a context within which the work of the following term – on television drama and, specifically, the single play – could subsequently be discussed. The question that the course tried to keep in play was broadly: who does television think its audience is and

[5] Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow, 'Television: a World in Action', *Screen*, Summer 1977, vol 18 no 2, pp 7-59.

what sort of strategies are available within the planning and production process to exercise control over what that audience sees on its screens?

The traditional attitude of undergraduates (and, indeed, of other students) to the idea of censorship and control in television unfortunately tends to the simplistic. Either they adopt the excessively liberal position that censorship, *per se*, is an infringement of individual freedom, a proscription of certain ideologies, a curtailment on creativity, a fundamentally restrictive practice, and hence we should have none of it; or they hold the reactionary belief that censorship is absolutely necessary as a social and moral corrective, as a buffer against the evils of sexuality, pornography, blasphemy, violence, obscene language and bad taste. The course attempted to propose the entire field of censorship as a highly complex one, and in particular to stimulate thought about the modern interests of the informed viewer-participant in this respect.

Thus, censorship is not simply a question of forbidding a programme during or after its preparation for transmission, of demanding the excision of offending lines or camera shots, of suggesting a neat shift of emphasis in the articulation of an argument – all fairly extreme measures designed to stave off the sort of displeasure that can embarrass governments, alienate advertisers, incense licence-payers. In short, censorship is not a practice that, generally speaking, makes the broadcasting authorities out to be insensitive monoliths; on the contrary, successive Chairmen of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and Directors-General of the BBC have gone to great lengths to avoid using their ultimate sanctions, while government has traditionally been wary of appearing to dictate to the authorities. Rather, censorship is found to be operating all the time in a multiplicity of ways, according to a virtual code of conventions, devices, practices, strategies that have become so naturalised within British television culture that the viewer often no longer recognises them as in any way restrictive. It follows that each of these strategies, however inadequately theorised at the present time, has an inseparable link with some form of institutionally specified apprehension of the audience. The Glasgow course took as its theoretical basis, therefore, the position that questions of control

can only be debated productively alongside notions of audience.

Audience and Censorship

After a general introductory lecture which I shall discuss below, the three earliest meetings of the class examined notions of the television audience. They consisted of a contextualising lecture, a comparative viewing of an edition of BBC 1's *Nationwide* and of BBC 2's *Newsnight*, and a seminar analysis to discuss, among other things, the image those programmes appear to construct of their viewing public. The lecture introduced 'the concept of the audience' derived by television professionals from audience measurement mechanisms and in particular noted the professionals' desire for reliable audience profiles to enable them to build schedules that will prove popular with particular categories of viewer. Not only does the deeply problematic notion persist that there are certain differences of expectation as between typical viewers of the two BBC services; we also have to consider the impact of the 'cost per thousand' principle in commercial TV, with its attempt to deliver to the advertiser an audience of the right size, composition, taste and spending power within a given programme slot. This obviously connects with the whole issue of supposed family viewing patterns and the channel selection prerogatives that seem to be operating at different times during the daily viewing cycle.[6] (At the time the course was taught it was interesting to speculate about how Channel Four might fit within all this, given its pronouncements, supported by the IBA, about encouraging advertising of a palpably different kind, and its declared aim of protecting minority programming from the so-called ghetto slots.)

The lecture then considered the methods of BBC Audience Research, the Joint Industry Committee for Television Advertising Research (JICTAR) and the newly established Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB), along with some of the weaknesses and problems assocated with any form of random quantitative and qualitative research. With a keen eye on

Raymond Williams' theory of 'planned flow', we then noted the existence of a set of tactical assumptions and criteria relating to audience that are nurtured by programme schedulers within a duopoly that has institutionalised competition. These criteria include channel loyalty and the behaviourist phenomena known as 'Inheritance Factor' and 'Pre-echo', now arguably losing their earlier significance due to British viewers' widespread use of video cassette recorders to 'time-shift' broadcast programmes, thereby effectively organising their own schedules.

From there the lecture moved (following Stuart Hood, whose booklet *On Television*[7] was prescribed reading for the course) to the significance of the 'preferred reading', the 'commonsense' interpretation of events encoded in images and words in such a way as to reflect the 'reasonable' view of practitioners to which they suppose any normal viewer will readily subscribe. This in turn raises the issue of the schedulers' unproblematic picture of the average viewer as an automatic member of a cosy home-centred family group.[8] It also relates to the way certain programmes – notably current affairs magazines – actually *construct* audiences for themselves, informing the viewer of his/her social grouping, perpetuating a code of 'normal' social behaviour and even practising a form of implicit censorship by failing to represent any values other than 'commonsense' ones.

The lecture concluded by pointing to some alternative, more progressive ways in which an audience might be defined, for example in terms of individuals who come together as a community that acknowledges the family as just one of a number of significant social groupings. Thus, instead of confirming the notion of an unquestioning united nation of breadwinners, housewives and schoolchildren, television might justifiably see its audience as members of work situations, trade unions, political parties, classes of study, interest groups, sports teams, and so on, possessing interests, values, objectives and problems that originate outside (but interact with) the family circle. Continued failure to do so can only be termed a sustained form of audience misconception and censorship on ideas.

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[6] Richard Paterson, 'Planning the Family: The Art of the Television Schedule', *Screen Education* no 35, Summer 1980, pp 79-85.

[7] Stuart Hood, *On Television*, Pluto Press, 1980.
[8] Richard Paterson, op cit.

The method of analysis employed in the *Nationwide/Newsnight* sessions followed that of the two BFI Television Monographs on *Nationwide*.[9] The point of including the *Newsnight* edition of the same day of transmission was quite obviously to open up a discussion around the rather different mode of address exhibited by the late-night, 'in-depth' programme as compared with its early evening, family magazine counterpart. The day selected for scrutiny, however, turned out by chance to be a very rich one indeed. The emotional temperature of the lead items was such that notions of audience construction and 'commonsense' readings could easily be illustrated. At the same time, however, there were sufficient instances within the programmes, especially on the key interviews conducted by David Dimbleby, to challenge an uncritical acceptance of such notions.

The day in question was October 16, 1981, when news of the latest, and potentially most serious, reversal in the fortunes of British Leyland broke with dramatic consequences on the final day of the Tory Party Conference at Blackpool. Sir Michael Edwardes had threatened, with Government backing, to close the company down for good in the event of strike action resulting from the workforce's rejection of a 3.8% wage offer. Shots of Margaret Thatcher's keynote address to the party faithful only a week before the important Croydon by-election were ironically intercut with scenes of nearly 5,000 people circling the Winter Gardens demanding more jobs to the refrain of 'Tebbit Out'. The 'party of *all* the people', in the Prime Minister's phrase, was effectively under seige and there was even an eruption of vocal dissent into the conference hall.

On such a day both *Nationwide* and *Newsnight* had a lot to pack into their time slots, with the latter under the additional pressure to include a retrospective on the career of General Dayan, whose death was announced during the course of the evening. There was a strong sense of the news disseminating process under stress which

made it a particularly rewarding day for analysis. A current affairs analysis of this sort would normally profit from the use of immediately contemporary material, so that the discussion is suitably complicated by the students bringing to the class an accumulation of responses to the news items gathered from all the media during the week in question. But the more measured pace of a normal day's reporting is unlikely to prove as successful, from the educational point of view, as a coincidence of controversial events.

After the *Nationwide/Newsnight* discussion, and engagement with notions of implicit censorship arising out of unilateral audience construction tendencies, the emphasis of the course shifted towards more visible institutional restraints and censorship. A lecture was inserted at this stage to explain in some detail the provisions of the 1980 Broadcasting Act. This inevitably brought up the statutory extension of the IBA's function and powers, the provision of a second service by the IBA and the legal framework for the Welsh Fourth Channel. But the main point at issue was to be Part IV of the Act – that giving legal substance to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, a new official body with wide powers to consider and adjudicate upon complaints of 'unjust or unfair treatment' in sound or television broadcast programmes or of 'unwarranted infringement of privacy in, or in connection with the obtaining of material included in', broadcast programmes. In other words, a watchdog body to replace the previous non-statutory complaints procedure with the power to control by potentially insidious means the output of television. The lecture considered the provisions and exclusions of the Act with regard to the Commission and noted the manner in which complaints must be submitted, hearings conducted and findings made public. Finally, the warnings that the barrister Geoffrey Robertson has consistently issued to practitioners and consumers alike about the very real threat that the Commission poses to creativity and innovation[10] were put to the class.

The full implications of this new agency have yet to be assessed; at the time of the course there had only been a small handful of adjudications by the Commission. Most forms of institutional restraint are attributed to a prevailing programme ethos within the broadcasting authorities and producing companies. But in the

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[9] Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley, *Everyday Television: 'Nationwide'*, BFI TV Monograph no 10, 1978 and David Morley, *The Nationwide Audience*, BFI TV Monograph no 11, 1980.

40 Complaints Commission we have an agency within the overall apparatus of control that promises to become as effective a sanction against the interests of practitioners as other forms of restraint are against the consumer's freedom of choice. The Act produces the disquieting anomaly where one of its sections stands in contradiction to another: the Fourth Channel clauses positively legislate for innovation and experiment, while the Complaints Commission clauses effectively discourage producers from taking the risks immanent in progressive or potentially controversial work.

The course's discussion of content control then shifted to the more tangible forms of censorship that seem to be at work within television itself, particularly in the realm of drama where its effects are perhaps most easily visible. The lecture that followed drew heavily upon the material in Clive Goodwin's famous piece on censorship in TV drama in the Edinburgh 1977 International Television Festival's programme[11] and upon the papers commissioned on the same subject for each subsequent festival programme in Goodwin's memory. Together these contributions, by Kenith Trodd, John Howkins, John Wyver and others make up a substantial file of material on the theory and practice of television censorship in Britain. Thus, the students were introduced to the major categories of censorship identified by Goodwin: direct (ie withdrawal, cutting or interference); application of common sense principles of good taste; self-censorship by writers; political censorship; scheduling ploys, financial control; and preferred models (ie naturalism). They were then given a glimpse of the essentially similar attitudes of the BBC and IBA to the problem of censorship. The BBC's programme ethos, aimed at an *ingrained code* of what is seemingly within the *politics of the*

consensus and adequately reinforced by recruitment policies, was set against the IBA's duty under the 1954 Act to have regard to 'good taste and decency', a requirement which can lead to an unadventurous policy on the part of the ITV contractors.

Although cases of brutality to particular texts are undoubtedly an interesting part of the censorship debate, it is important, in my view, that students be helped towards an awareness of the kind of hidden, unacknowledged censorship that goes on all the time in television. In the very act of selecting a particular discourse, mode of address, method of presentation over another, television effectively denies *in the moment of transmission* the existence of alternatives, implying a form of constraint exercised over the audience's apprehension of alternatives. This process, whether conscious or unconscious, is, of course, closely bound up with television's tendency to dispense consensus readings conforming to the dominant ideology, and with the presence of a house style to which newly appointed practitioners are expected to become attuned.

The class was at this stage exposed to a specific instance of programme production which had incurred institutional displeasure to the extent that it had experienced outright banning from the schedule and the refusal of repeat showings. The material studied was the now famous case of Thames Television's *Viewpoint* series, written by Alan Horrox, Douglas Lowndes and Gillian Skirrow and transmitted in the autumn of 1975 as an example of how an alternative, more radical television practice could function within the schools broadcasting category. Two of the more controversial episodes were seen by the class, including Programme Eight, 'Showbusiness', which looked at the industrial structure of the communications industry and showed how financial and political pressure can influence the range and content of messages selected for mass production.

Taking advantage of the convenient proximity of one of *Viewpoint*'s producers, we invited Gillian Skirrow along the following week to talk to the class about her involvement with the making of the series and the history of opposition that it had encountered at Thames and the IBA. By way of preparation, the class had been asked to read her article discussing the experience of *Viewpoint* as a basis for theorising a

[10] See in particular Geoffrey Robertson, 'Hard Cases Making Bad Laws', *Edinburgh International Television Festival Official Programme*, 1981, pp 19-20, and various contributions to *The Listener* during 1980. See also Mike Wooller on the dangers of the legislation in *Television Today*, October 16 1980, p 20 and, for the opposite view, Paul Johnson, 'The Broadcasting Leviathan Must Be Civilised and Tamed', *The Listener*, January 1 1981, pp 5-6.
[11] Clive Goodwin, 'Censorship and Drama', *EITF Official Programme*, 1977, pp 37-40.

radical television practice.[12] While I would agree with John Ellis' observation that 'a facile anti-capitalism is a stock-in-trade of most arts undergraduates, who are quite willing to be cynical about "the men with the money"'[13], on this occasion their reaction to *Viewpoint* and its treatment by authority was by no means uniformly uncritical or uncomplicated. The class displayed a genuine 'need to know' arising from an uneasy recognition of the threat to broadcasting freedom that the *Viewpoint* controversy represented. Len Masterman's opinion[14] that pupils do not by and large, share their teachers' and lecturers' fascination and even preoccupation with questions of power and control was certainly not borne out by the exchange. Moreover, when it came to the class examination at the end of the term, significantly, the two questions relating most closely to censorship and control were attempted by three-fifths of the students in a class of 30.

The final class in the course took the form of a broad summary of the ground covered in earlier meetings, followed by a report on the very latest developments in the run-up to the commencement of the Fourth Channel. Six main headings were considered here: Policy; Projected Audience Share; Finance; Commissioning Procedure; Independent Producers; Commitment to Innovation. Taking account of the available information on commissions already announced, we speculated upon Channel Four's potential, in the role of publisher rather than producer, for evolving a distinctive style of its own. In terms of the censorship debate, it was relevant to consider whether the requirements laid on the IBA by the Broadcasting Act 1980 – to ensure the Channel's appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by ITV, to encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes, to seek programme material from sources other than ITV contractors – would result in a more pluralistic service, given to fewer acts of constraint. It was also instructive to discuss

whether, despite the power and importance of its commercial infrastructure, Channel Four could still emerge as a progressive channel, given the slightly greater latitude enjoyed by Jeremy Isaacs in the maintenance of balance in subject-matter, having regard to programmes broadcast *as a whole.*

Although the course was centered around the notions of audience and censorship, it was impossible, within the context of immediately contemporary developments in television's institutional history, to make these its exclusive concerns. At a time when new phenomena like the Fourth Channel, the renewal of ITV franchises, the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board, the Complaints Commission, and so on were contributing to a rapidly changing picture of British television, it would have been a serious missed opportunity not to have reported and assessed the very latest developments in some of these areas as we went along. I was concerned also to draw the class's attention to some of the difficulties that can surround serious critical analysis of television, arising to some extent out of the lack of any clearly defined *theory* of television. As an introduction to the course on audience and censorship, I therefore sought to put the case for an approach to television criticism that is careful continually to acknowledge institutional questions – of organisation, audience, control, etc. – as of central importance in any discussion of content. I set about this by asking members of the class to read, by way of preparation for the first meeting, Ashley Pringle's short but important essay 'An Introduction to a Critique of Television', which appeared in *Screen* over a decade ago.[15]

Partly supporting Marshall McLuhan's call for a new critical aesthetic to be applied to television, one that does not depend on studies drawn from quite different critical traditions, Pringle identified what he saw as the inadequacies of existing criticism and analysis – notably that produced by, on the one hand, the press, and, on the other, by the sociology sector – in arriving at a satisfactory synthetic critique of the medium. He argued that the three 'cultural

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[12] Gillian Skirrow, 'Education and Television: Theory and Practice', in Carl Gardner (ed), *Media, Politics and Culture: a Socialist View*, London, Macmillan, 1979.

[13] John Ellis, op cit, p 39.

[14] Len Masterman, op cit, p 5.

[15] Ashley Pringle, 'TV Studies: An Introduction to a Critique of Television', *Screen*, Spring 1971, vol 12 no 1, pp 63-71.

units' of production in the medium – producer, product, consumer – required critical attention *as a whole* if the powerful hold and determinations of TV are not to escape attention. He goes on to offer a diagrammatic model suggesting the kinds of relations that might be relevant for consideration of the position of television within the national culture, a model that asserts the prime importance of the institutional context to any critique.

Pringle's clearly articulated position, with which many of us would concur despite the identification with McLuhan, was offered for discussion, partly as a means of justifying the institutional orientation of the course, but also to get the students thinking about TV programme analysis as a structured, coherent activity. Another aim was to draw attention to the shortcomings of television reviewing in Britain and to the shaky assumptions of audience that a non-rigorous critical practice must inevitably imply. To pursue this further, I next referred to the persuasive case advanced much more recently by Colin McArthur. McArthur is even more contemptuous than Pringle of traditional modes of TV reviewing, giving the impression that little has changed in the ten years that separate their essays. He concludes that:

A reviewing practice concerned with the processes of signification produced in particular institutions at particular moments would perhaps help to denaturalise the relationship which currently exists between viewers and programmes.[16]

Inadequate or superficial reviewing constitutes yet another form of restraint (and even censorship) to which television, in this case almost uniquely among cultural forms, is subjected. There are, however, growing signs that television is approaching the so-called 'third age of broadcasting' with a greater consciousness of the need for more rigorous self-scrutiny. Television programmes about television seem to be on the increase even if they do not yet fulfil Colin McArthur's prescription; both the BBC and Granada are currently preparing multi-part

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[16] Colin McArthur, 'Point of Review: Television Criticism in the Press', *Screen Education* no 35, 1980, p 61.

series on the history of television; Channel Four has already displayed a capacity for more rigorous enquiry and self-reflexiveness.

To return to the course, the work of the term was assessed by a one-hour class examination, but an examination in which the essay titles were circulated fifteen days in advance to permit a prepared answer likely to be of more value from the point of view of both teacher and student than a traditional unseen paper; the resulting standard of answers was high.

Glasgow and Strathclyde: the future

Instead of Audience and Censorship the second year television course which began in October 1982 is structured around the themes of Channel Four and Technology – taking advantage of Channel Four's arrival and the publication of the Hunt Committee's deliberations on cable systems. A monitoring of the new channel's launch and initial output is being conducted, together with an examination of the most recent data on new technological developments. But issues of censorship and audience may well be returned to in future years.

October 1982 also saw the introduction of a new four-year course to joint Honours degree level in Film and Television Studies taught collaboratively by the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde. The development of this new course, with a major specialisation in Television Studies alongside Film Studies, offers the opportunity to teach more television in different ways than hitherto. In the first instance, the Honours level courses offered in a student's third and fourth years will initially consist of a two-year cycle of seven classes in Film and Television Studies, one of which will deal practically and theoretically with Production and Technology in Cinema and Television. Four classes will specialise further in the area of film, while theoretical work in television studies will be carried on under the headings 'Television and the State' and 'Forms of Television'. The first will continue the study of British television structures, at the same time extending the debate to include a comparative survey of selected foreign broadcasting systems. Issues of accountability, censorship, patronage and control will obviously be central to this debate. 'Forms of Television' will aim to discover through the close analysis of different programme categories

the codes and systems at work in these particular instances of television production. The course will permit a substantial practical component.

The teaching of a body of knowledge specifically inflected towards television can thus be extended within a degree structure which preserves the principle of combining the study of Film and Television with that of another discipline. This reflects the teaching staff's view that the study of Film and Television does not replace existing, more traditional studies but works most productively in relation to them.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the new course, taught over an extended period, will offer us the chance to attempt an integration of film study and television study that has so far eluded us. It will be possible to confront existing thinking towards theories of television with received film theories, looking for example at the complications raised by notions of authorship in television as well as in film; at television as well as film as a determinant within national cultures; at new technology and its implications for both television and cinema as social institutions.

POPULAR CULTURE AND ROCK MUSIC

LEZ COOK REFLECTS ON A SIGNIFICANT INCLUSION IN A NEW OPEN UNIVERSITY COURSE

In relation to the advance in film theory in recent years the ideological significance of rock music has been seriously undervalued. Sporadic efforts have been made to redress the balance, not least in the pages of *Screen Education*[1], but pop and rock music has nevertheless remained a problem for cultural theorists, as Simon Frith indicated in his article 'Music For Pleasure' .

The main area of cultural analysis within which popular music has been addressed is that of subcultural theory and here the approach has inclined towards the subcultural *use* of rock music, leaving the question of the internal work-ings of the music, its production and consumption, as theoretical problems which lay beyond the realms of its enquiry. The inclusion of pop and rock music as a significant element within the new Open University 'Popular Culture' course[2] is therefore to be welcomed, not

only because it confronts the problem but because it takes considerable steps towards establishing the cultural importance of popular music within the field of cultural studies.

My main concern here is to evaluate the manner in which the OU course theorises rock music as a cultural practice. In doing so I intend to outline a theoretical framework for studying rock music, as a contribution towards locating rock within the media studies/communication studies/cultural studies nexus. Focusing on one aspect of an integrated, interdisciplinary course runs the risk of severing the complex network of theoretical debates which permeate the course's structure. But such is the intellectual sweep of the course that any detailed consideration of it must necessarily take a metonymic approach. I think it is possible to separate out the popular music parts of the course without taking the 'partialising focus' against which Tony Bennett warns in his discussion of popular culture as a 'teaching object'[3]. Furthermore, while my chief concern is to indicate the value of rock music as a 'teaching object' in its own right as well as within the field of media and cultural studies, by concentrating specifically upon how rock and pop music is theorised within the course it should be possible to identify the theoretical concerns which inform the course as a whole.

Before addressing myself to the theoretical 'problem' of rock music it would be useful to outline the OU's Popular Culture course. Its

[1] Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, 'Rock and Sexuality', *Screen Education* no 29, Winter 1978/79, pp 3-19; Jenny Taylor and David Laing, 'Disco-Pleasure-Discourse', *Screen Education* no 31, Summer 1979, pp 43-48; Simon Frith, 'Music for Pleasure', *Screen Education* no 34, pp 51-61; Iain Chambers, 'Pop Music: a Teaching Perspective', *Screen Education* no 39, pp 35-46.

[2] *Popular Culture*, A Second Level Course, Open University U203, Open University Press, 1981-1982. Course unit and page references in the text.

[3] Tony Bennett, 'Popular Culture: a "Teaching Object"', *Screen Education* no 34, pp 17-29.

scope is an ambitious one, with an historical span which extends, roughly, from the 1830s to the present day – though in some cases, as in the 'Christmas' case study with which the course kicks off, it is necessary to delve a little deeper into history, emphasising that the study of popular culture cannot be confined to the period of industrial capitalism.

The range of cultural theory which is drawn upon throughout the course is equally broad, dating from the publication of Matthew Arnold's 'Culture and Anarchy' in 1869 to Bourdieu, Foucault and the post-structuralists, via Saussure, Gramsci, Leavis, Hoggart, Williams, Althusser, Barthes, et al. Such a range of cultural and intellectual history could have proved unmanageable but for the systematic manner in which the course presents its material. Thus after an initial foray into popular culture territory with the 'Christmas' case study in which the central themes and modes of analysis are introduced, there is an intensive elaboration of the theoretical and historical parameters of the course, where not only the history of popular culture but the history of the study of popular culture are expounded.

This introduction to the themes and issues of popular culture constitutes Block 1 (Units 1-3) of the course. For the intrepid Open University student six more blocks (29 units) lie ahead. Block 2 plunges into the depths of the nineteenth century to investigate the emergence of an urban popular culture during the 1830s and '40s and traces the historical development of popular culture through to the 1930s and '40s, where it focuses upon British cinema in the '30s and broadcasting during World War Two.

This historical survey is followed by a methodological gear change in Block 3 where a number of theoretical approaches – interpretive, functional, structuralist, sociological – are tested against a variety of 'lived cultures', including motor bike culture, Costa del Sol package holidays and domestic television viewing. The latter is intended to prepare the OU student for a full-scale assault on the texts of popular culture in Block 4, using all the big guns of structuralism, semiology and psychoanalysis. The material in this block, dealing with the debate around realism, the positioned reader, the active reader, semiology, image and ideology, pleasure and pscyhoanalysis, will be familiar

territory to readers of *Screen*. What may be less familiar is the ground covered in Unit 16: 'Reading' Popular Music. To this I will return shortly.

Block 5 brings the historical perspective of the course up to date by focusing on post-war developments in popular culture. Beginning with an overview of social relations in the post-war period – the construction and collapse of hegemonic 'consent' – it moves on to an investigation of the 'lived experience' of post-war youth and the nature and effectivity of their opposition to the dominant ideology. Block 5 concludes with a reworking of the textual analyses of the previous block in considering three popular cultural entertainments of the post-war period: James Bond novels, TV police fictions, and TV sit-coms.

Block 6 considers the contribution of science and technology to popular culture through a study of the technological basis of the rock music industry (Unit 24); technological developments in the visual arts which made possible the mass production of visual images (Unit 25); the representation of science on television and in the press (Unit 26); and the cultural significance and popularity of science fiction (Unit 27). The course culminates, in Block 7, with an investigation into the ways in which the state intervenes in the sphere of popular culture, concentrating particularly upon the role of the state in shaping education as a means of establishing and maintaining hegemony.

This outline should give some indication of the scope of the course. That it can be said to negotiate this cultural and intellectual expanse reasonably successfully is due in large part to the cumulative and integrated manner in which it stacks the many floors of its interdisciplinary house, unit upon unit, block upon block. This is not to suggest that there is a consensus of opinion among the course team, on the contrary the lack of consensus is stressed and differences of opinion are seen as productive in that they problematise the central debates rather than presenting them as straightforward:

While characterised by a strong sense of agreement concerning what the central questions are in the study of popular culture, the course is also characterised by an equally strong sense of disagreement as to how such questions should be answered. Rather than trying to fudge such

disagreements by compromising over them, we have sought to make them open and explicit, making them clear so that you can feel a part of a lively and productive debate. (Course Outline, p 15)

The major area of contention is the theory of hegemony and its application to popular culture, a question which is returned to again and again throughout the course. This is perhaps the best example of how the course continually reworks its central debates: popular culture as mass culture and as folk culture, hegemony, ideology, structuralism and culturalism. Nothing is taken at face value – indeed the problem for the OU Popular Culture student is to keep track of the multitude of theoretical concepts that are introduced as the course proceeds and the different ways they are used to inform the various debates.

Some sense of the 'productive disagreement' between different unit tutors may become apparent if we move on to consider how the course deals with rock music both as textual practice and as 'lived culture'. One immediately obvious disagreement between the unit tutors is how they choose to label the field of enquiry. Richard Middleton in his textual analysis (Unit 16) uses the more general term 'popular music'. When applied to the lived experience of post-war youth however the more specific, but equally vague, 'pop music' is preferred (Units 19/20). As Dave Elliott says, however, in his discussion of the music industry (Unit 24):

The term 'rock music' is somewhat more precise than pop music, which itself is more specific than popular music. The latter implies any music which has widespread popularity, while pop music suggests a specific brand or type, associated in general with the various teenage cults of the past two or three decades. 'Pop' in fact is a term used widely by the media but rarely by either fans or 'serious' bands, who tend to use the labels 'rock' or 'rock and roll' or derivatives (e.g. punk). The implications here is that rock is less compromised and co-opted than pop, but this is obviously a matter of opinion. (Unit 24, p 7).

The question of terminology may seem a trivial one but it seems indicative of the problems cultural theorists have in dealing with the variety of popular music favoured by the post-war spectacular youth cultures. If it is true that rock music and its derivatives – rock and roll,

psychedelic rock, glam rock, punk rock, etc – are, at certain moments and in varying degrees, more oppositional than the fully co-opted 'pop' music and the pro-hegemonic 'popular' music then the distinction should be made, not least because this helps clarify the value of rock for an oppositional pedagogy. Given this criterion what form should such a 'teaching object' take?

Any theory of rock music as cultural practice must take into consideration its industrial base. There is a lesson to be learned from film studies here, for the concern which has been shown in recent years to establish the industrial nature of film production within the film studies curriculum has gone a long way towards redressing the overly textual emphasis of the genre/authorship approach.

It could be argued that the industrial base of music production is of primary importance, especially in relation to the struggle for cultural hegemony that is sporadically played out in the arena of rock music when 'new waves' (e.g. punk) emerge to challenge the hegemony of the musical status quo. As I will try to illustrate when I consider musical form the oppositional potential of punk resided not so much in its 'socialist realism' as in its non-professional production standards and the alternative network of independent record labels which it nurtured. This, together with the oppositional ideology which informed punk, constituted a considerable threat to the major record companies who struggled for a time to overcome it. That they eventually succeeded in re-establishing control had much to do with the fact that the means of record production and distribution remained in their hands, illustrating that the degree to which the small record labels could be truly independent was always limited.

The role of technology in the rock music equation is therefore crucial and, as Dave Elliott indicates, it can be seen to cut both ways:

On the one hand it can be argued that since the record companies own and control the physical means of production and hire musicians, they will choose what technology to use and how it is used – although they will be influenced by domestic playback equipment and, to a lesser extent, by the firms who manufacture studio equipment. The other view is that the company has to follow the market – in response to consumer preference in terms of musical tastes, record (and playback

equipment) quality, and perhaps also in response to musicians' technical preference. (Unit 24, p 14)

Elliott is here articulating a central theme of his unit (and of the course): the tension between rock music/popular culture as mass culture, 'imposed from above', and the view of rock music/popular culture as folk culture, 'emerging from below'. Study of rock music as industry illustrates that while the majors have the whip hand through ownership of the means of production their industrial hegemony can still be undermined in various ways – the most recent being the move away from record-buying on the behalf of the consumer to much cheaper home taping, a trend which is seriously undercutting the profit margins of the major record companies. Another advantage of the industrial approach is that it allows connections to be made with the other media when dealing with the marketing of the product and in this way the corporate nature of cultural production can be emphasised.

The area of rock music analysis which tends to present the major stumbling block for cultural theorists is that of musical language. While visual texts have been painstakingly analysed using the tools of structuralism and semiotics there seems to be a reluctance to perform the same operation on musical texts. Certainly the language of musical theory – harmony, melody, pitch, syncopation, counterpoint, tones, semitones, pentatonic scales – seems obscure to anyone who hasn't been initiated into it, but that also applies to written and visual language.

Rock music, as Richard Middleton illustrates in his 'Reading' Popular Music (Unit 16) is structured like a language no less that other texts. Rather than simply reviewing Middleton's survey of theoretical approaches to popular music I want to broaden the issue by trying to make some connections with film theory. In view of the need to establish rock as a useful and legitimate area of concern within media/cultural studies the forging of structural and ideological links between different media discourses can only be beneficial.

In 'Music for Pleasure', Simon Frith makes a similar attempt, but in choosing to develop the comparison through the formalism/realism debate he is led up a different alley to the one I want to explore. By asserting that '...the theories of representation that film critics have

taken from literary criticism aren't immediately available to music critics unless we reduce music to songs and songs to words...' Frith is, in my opinion, taking a too rigidly formalist view. He goes on to pose a question: 'What does it mean to call a piece of music a "classic realist text"?' which I shall try to answer.

Taking the essential characteristics of classic realism to be a narrative which leads to closure, a transparent representation of the world, and a hierarchical composition of discourses, I would suggest that virtually all 'popular' music is classic realist. In his opening section of Adorno's contribution to theorising popular music Middleton discusses Adorno's theory of 'standardisation' with reference to both the 32-bar form of the 'Tin Pan Alley' popular music on which Adorno was commenting and also the 12-bar form more typical of rock music. By examining their harmonic schemes or structures Middleton identifies a formulaic predictability which tends to support the standardisation thesis. While registering some reservations about Adorno's theory because of its lack of attention to rhythm, melody, timbre, texture and voice, Middleton does nevertheless agree that there is a predictability to much rock and pop music:

...the individual scheme is as a rule full of predictable elements and formulas; it's still usually anchored to 'the most primitive harmonic facts' and it still tends to be built up of aggregations of predictable phrase-lengths (usually 4 or 8 bars). Popular music, at least at this macro-structural level, remains a music which works within the known. A quick hearing of 'My Generation', 'White Riot', 'Gipsy Eyes' and 'Brown Girl In The Ring' will reveal the extent to which their structures depend on simple harmonic progressions, predictable melodic patterns, riffs and repetition. (Unit 16, p 9)

The predictability of much rock and pop music leads me to make a comparison with the narrative structure of classic realist texts. Just as narrative progression leads to closure in the classic realist text so rock and pop music texts 'depend on simple harmonic progressions' which lead the listener through the text. In most pop and much rock music these harmonic progressions lead to a 'harmonious' closure. A useful analogy can therefore be made between narrative structure in the film and literary text

and harmonic structure in the musical text.

The question of 'transparency' in the musical text is more problematic, mainly because music cannot be said to refer to an external referent in the sense that film and literary texts can. As Richard Middleton notes in his attempt to apply semiology to popular music: . .

The area of signification in music presents great problems ... The level of denotation seems to be lacking or at least unclear. Except in the very few cases of direct imitation of animal sounds (for instance, the animal noises in the Beatles' 'Good Morning') there is no system if objective reference to concepts and perceptions concerning the 'outside world'. Music isn't usually 'referential' in that sense. (Unit 16, p 31)

The hierarchy of discourses which compose the classic realist text can be identified a little more easily. In the musical text they would presumably be the assortment of musical 'voices' (whether these should be interpreted as harmony, melody, rhythm, tempo, pitch, etc, or the individual musical instruments is open to question) with either the harmonic or rhythmic 'base' or the leading vocal (depending on which interpretation of the discourses one opts for) being privileged as the dominant discourse.

This immediately leads us (following the debate in film theory) to question the notion that because there may be a dominant *discourse* in the classic musical text there is therefore a single dominant *meaning* in the text, and to substitute the notion of a 'preferred' meaning which creates space for the possibility of 'subordinate' readings. This conceptual leap brings us to the role of the listener and the extent to which s/he is positioned by the ideological work of the text, necessitating a consideration of pleasure and ideology in rock music.

Throughout Middleton's analysis, and elsewhere in musical theory, there is a clear suggestion that there is something intangible about music which can't be pinned down by structural and cultural analysis. Middleton indicats the nature of the problem in discussing a version of 'These Foolish Things':

The form is predictable (the standard AABA chorus), there's lots of repetition – harmonically, rhythmically and melodically – and the A section (the foundation of the song) is harmonically

unadventurous (it's based on a cliché, called the 'circle of fifths'). That said, however, there seems to me something substantively there, some irreducible content which is left out of account or destroyed by a reductive theory of standardisation. To put it crudely, and very inadequately, it is a 'good tune'... (Unit 16, p 11)

Rather than try to identify what makes a 'good tune' I want to consider how we are positioned as subjects by the musical text. Frith and McRobbie went some way towards analysing this in their article 'Rock and Sexuality' by suggesting ways in which 'cock rock' and 'teenybop' help to construct gender roles, an analysis which was subsequently criticised by Laing and Taylor for taking insufficient account of the listener's freedom to negotiate the subject positions made available by the musical text.

The question of rock as pleasure and that intangible 'something' which eludes analysis invites a psychoanalytic interpretation. Once again the theoretical work that has been carried out on pleasure in relation to visual texts can be drawn upon here. The attempt to theorise the pleasure of musical texts almost inevitably returns us to the pre-Oedipal and the construction of the subject. Significantly the origins of musical appreciation in the infant can be seen to pre-date visual recognition, to be found in:

... the aural relationship of baby and mother, which, together with the tactile relationship (and Barthes is, I'm sure, quite right implicitly to connect desire-to-hear and desire-to-feel), pre-dates the significance of visual signs (dependent as that is on an apprehension of the external world as other). The initial connotations of sound-structures (the origins of which may go back beyond the repetitive 'coos' of the mother even into the womb: the sound/ feel of maternal breathing and heartbeat) are prior to any emergence of a subject, in opposition to external reality; they refer not outward but inward, and for this reason the basic pleasure of music may be thought of as narcissistic. (Unit 16, p 37)

The application of psychoanalysis to rock music as a way of considering pleasure opens up an area of enquiry which has been little explored. The possibilities, in relation to the 'primal' pleasure of dance and the construction of sexuality, would seem worthy of further study. But this is not to suggest that the consumption of rock music can be understood outside of culture

and ideology. Pleasure is culturally mediated and ideologically inflected and is bound up with how rock music is received and used as ideology. Not only may the listener refuse to subscribe to the ideology of the text but s/he may make subordinate readings of a text. In this way the consumer is able to undermine the attempts of the major record companies to exert control over musical tastes.

This is apparent in the way that the post-war youth cultures have either nurtured or appropriated new forms of rock music (rock and roll in the 50s, ska, psychedelia, and 'progressive rock' in the 60s, heavy metal, punk and reggae in the 70s) for their own counter-hegemonic purposes. Each new musical wave has precipitated an ideological struggle where the major record companies have had to work to re-establish control by recapturing the new music and thus incorporate the challenge which it (and its attendent ideology) posed for the dominant ideology.

Rock music must therefore be seen not only as textual practice but also as 'lived culture', as an ideology which is used to provide a framework of meaning for counter-hegemonic youth: '...music lies at the centre of each youth culture and forms its primary means of identification and communication...' (Introduction to Units 19/20).

Given that rock music, as ideology, can be a tool of cultural struggle, to what extent can we talk about rock as a political language? Or does rock's political value simply reside in its (sub) cultural use? If we accept that even the most subversive rock music ('Anarchy in the UK', 'God Save The Queen', 'White Riot') conforms to the principles of classic realism, then in what sense can we talk of these musical texts as progressive? To what extent is the oppositional ideology expressed in the lyrics recuperated by the musical form? Do the harsh texture of the music and rough grain of the vocals create 'cracks' and 'fissures' in the otherwise 'closed' text? Richard Middleton highlights the contradictions involved – the tension between punk as subversive and punk as reactionary:

...the wholesale repetitions in 'White Riot' generate a feeling of tight group solidarity, and almost – given the timbre, vocal attack, noise level and use of accent – one of mob violence... on the other hand, wholesale repetition of complete phrases suggest a deliberate attempt to be provocatively, quasi-mindlessly banal. (Unit 16, p 33)

Would it be more accurate to talk about punk as 'socialist realism' rather than 'progressive realism?' And if so, how politically effective has it been in instilling a socialist/oppositional consciousness into the minds of its subcultural adherents? What then would constitute a 'progressive' musical text? One produced perhaps by the post-punk avant-garde which attempted to open up the text, expose its contradictions? What would there be to prevent such an attempt at deconstruction from turning into a purely formalist exercise? .

In his discussion of countercultural rock Middleton makes the point that:

Music (as distinct from lyrics) is badly suited to the expression of political argument. The reason is simply that its denotations are not sufficiently precise. (Unit 20, p 87)

This returns us to the problem of musical language not being referential, yet:

...music is widely felt to connote – that is, to refer to subjective associations with whatever it is that is signified – and yet what is connoted is hard to verbalise and agree about. (Unit 16, p 31)

Until more work is done on the connotations of rock music, the particular manner in which certain forms of rock have specific ideological effects at specific historical moments, the difficulty of theorising rock will remain.

It is to the credit of the Open University Popular Culture course team that this task of theorising rock music as textual practice and as lived culture has been introduced within the academic curriculum. By linking rock music to other cultural practices it becomes possible to see the overall context, the breadth of cultural diversity, within which the dominant institutions work to maintain a cultural and political hegemony:

Rock music simply provides one 'theatre' in which rival views and interpretations struggle for expression, in an overall context still defined by the dominant institutions and economic relations of society. (Unit 24, p 49)

'PROGRESSIVE' PEDAGOGY?

IAN CONNELL RESPONDS
TO A RECENT DEBATE ON
‾ ‾‾TEACHING STRATEGIES

The final issues of *Screen Education* included a number of articles that focused on teaching. The proposed outlines and recommended courses of action were, each of them in their different ways, useful, and several aspects of the discussion productively provocative. I only hope that the now merged *Screen Education/Screen* will continue to publish this type of article and will make a serious effort to follow up at least some of the issues raised by Alvarado, Williamson and Masterman.

It is somewhat surprising that in the discussion so far only fleeting references have been made to the current conditions of teaching. These are far from favourable to the development of a more widespread consideration of how to teach 'progressively', let alone to the adoption of some or any of the practices recommended. The articles have been written as if much of state education, in all sectors, were not in serious danger of being dismantled. Little note has been taken of attempts to install as dominant criteria those of the market. Nor has there been much attention to the mobilisation of Conservative intellectuals whose declared objectives include 'regaining the commanding heights of the moral and intellectual economy'.[1]

And then there are the shambling attempts to campaign against cuts and job losses. At best the efforts are defensive. And they are frequently sectarian: 'Why me/this department/this college/ this sector? What about them/that department/ etc?' The overall effect is a conservative one, so that if the nature of teaching is discussed at all

these days it is hardly to consider how it might be made more rigorously progressive, critical or democratic. Rather the efforts will be directed to surviving in work, as quietly and as acceptably as possible, with as much 'IT' input as can be scrabbled together.

Yet even in less difficult times, or even where there is now some kind of officially blessed space so to do, there would seem to be little enthusiasm for the sort of critical discussion of teaching which *Screen Education* published. The Coventry Polytechnic degree course on which I am employed – one of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) Communication Studies courses – has just about completed its first major, quinquennial review. At the same time a question mark has been placed over its continued existence beyond 1984 as a consequence of the National Advisory Board (NAB) planning exercise, or more precisely, as a result of the way in which senior members of staff and the directorate responded to NAB and to their perceptions of Government intent.

In our now considerable deliberations about the course, both in the context of the review and of the threat posed by 'rationalisation' and by the possibility of staff being 'shed' (our Director's preferred term), the manner of our teaching has not been a major topic for discussion. Instead we have had to concentrate on the manifest content, the 'open curriculum' of the course. We have had to calculate, for instance, whether it is worth risking references to the inclusion of Marxist literature. Should we risk again being judged sops for 'the recent and the fashionable' by referencing semiological authors and texts? Should we not make it abundantly clear that we are dealing with all the sorts of issues considered

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[1] Martin Walker, 'The Unthinkable Men behind Mrs Thatcher', the *Guardian*, March 1, 1983.

important by mainstream sociologists and psychologists and locate all that other tricky/difficult/dangerous stuff in optional courses – y'know, courses entitled 'New approaches to...' or 'Alternative perspectives on...'? Apart from this, in more recent weeks we have also had to try and win some of the Info Tec action – introductory courses to the use of computers, and short courses on the implications of new broadcasting technologies and the like.

During all this, nobody refused to discuss how we teach. We even managed one or two attempts at it, but without much enthusiasm. We were haunted by the feeling that really there were more pressing matters, and, anyway, it became apparent that we really didn't know quite how to discuss the problems of teaching as such.

Yet, it wasn't just because of these quite considerable problems that teaching was not a major item for discussion. It is unlikely that anyone will be surprised to learn that during the four, going on five, years our course has been running, there has been no shortage of complaints from the students about aspects of the way in which the course is taught. Nor will it be surprising that even members of staff have stated that they recognise that there are problems with, for instance, the lecture/seminar format of the course. It seems to me these have been raised as simply technical problems; we might lecture less then, or perhaps come up with alternatives to exams in the second year – possibly important revisions, but with the feel of mere technical tinkering. The ideological dimension of the teaching – how its conduct might well contribute to reproducing knowledge as uncontestable and therefore beyond question – hasn't been pursued with any enthusiasm.

In all probability, having taken due note and having been seen to take due note, and to have expressed due concern as well as our good intentions to attend to the problems of teaching in the future, the course (assuming the CNAA is satisfied with these protestations of good faith) will continue on its way much as it did before. Now, I'm sure our course is by no means atypical nor is it by any means the worst possible example. In departments ruled more absolutely by the dictates of *professionalism*, I can imagine that any doubts and questions one may have about teaching and the relations it established between 'teachers' and 'pupils' will be kept well-and-truly to oneself. It is still the case that if one is experiencing doubts or problems this can

easily be defined as, and accepted as, a purely personal matter and, therefore, something for the individual teacher concerned to sort out. It is not a matter for collective determination. And, of course, any problem can always be displaced on to the students, of whom it can always be said that they are too 'thick'/'sexist'/'reactionary' to appreciate what we are trying to do!

Given these conditions I found the *Screen Education* discussion somewhat abstract. It is a discussion which anticipates a readership broadly on the same wavelength, broadly committed to the aims and objectives of the contributors. There is little said which suggests how to get people, our colleagues, onto that wavelength in the first place. Moreover, it is a discussion which seems to accept colonial status for the programmes and strategies proposed, to take for granted an uneasy and seemingly endless co-existence with, and subordination to, all the mainstream theories and pedagogies.

It seems to do this by concentrating exclusively on teaching practice. It seems to assume that 'our' space, 'our' little bit of the curriculum, can be made over to really progressive teaching irrespective of, or in spite of, what is going on elsewhere or around that space. So long as we burrow in deeply enough, don't make a public fuss, keep our heads down during the really difficult moments, then the space is ours and available for clandestine transformation. Under an acceptable guise, get on with the radical deconstruction that the students are so much in need of.

Perhaps this is to misread what is being proposed. It may be felt that the institutionalised, the inscribed, the objectively given, the already established position of the professional teacher and the situationally given relations of this position to that of student can only be transformed progressively in and through individuals self-consciously teaching in different ways. This certainly seems to be the drift of Judith Williamson's remarks.[2] If this is so, how might any successes be generalised beyond the confines of the particular individual's classroom or seminars? What if anything do we do about those bodies empowered to scrutinise and 'recommend' changes? And what do we do to keep 'unreconstructed' discourses and

[2] Judith Williamson, 'How Does Girl Number Twenty Understand Ideology?', *Screen Education* no 40, Autumn/Winter 1981/82, pp 80-87.

practices at bay? Are there not constraining factors, limits to what it is possible for any individual, however self-conscious, to do?

What is being proposed, certainly by Judith Williamson, is a strategy for the constitution of a radical enclave. The space to be created for what she calls 'truly questioning thought' seems to require co-existence of a reactionary mainstream. At any rate it is a strategy which envisages the possibility of deconstruction in one course, or set of seminars, and apparently only with students who are already predisposed to deconstruction. It is a strategy which also presupposes that however hostile, the location can always be neutralised and successfully negotiated.

At first sight such a strategy would seem well suited to either the peripheral situation of 'liberal studies' teaching or else 'inter-disciplinary' set-ups like Communication Studies courses. These courses are presented as pluralistic hybrids that introduce a variety of disciplines, of theoretical and methodological paradigms, each mutually and critically informing the other. Until now 'inter-disciplinary' has been interpreted fairly loosely, and so long as syllabuses are carefully, tactfully written then it is quite likely that studying 'representations' and 'subjectivity, consciousness, formation of the subject, deconstruction of the subject' will gain some kind of space.

In practice however the professional inter-disciplinary character of such courses is not quite as open and plural as it is made to seem. In fact it can often mean the uneasy co-existence of specialisms, each jealously guarding its claim for consideration, recognition, and official approval. A somewhat less than 'hidden' curriculum operates in the assembly and organisation of courses. Students enter a situation so organised as to encourage their spotting and observing disciplinary boundaries and the disciplinary pecking order. How is this to be countered?

The *Screen Education* discussions of teaching at times presumed that certain paradigms had already been dislodged and surpassed, paradigms (eg literary critical concepts of textual analysis, normative sociology and behavioural psychology) that in actual fact continue to exercise hegemony over the field of study into which an 'intervention' is being proposed. The strategy proposed does not seriously, fundamentally, question this hegemony. Rather it negotiates it, and as a consequence the radical potential of the intervention is defused.

The material which such an intervention would introduce is indeed capable of raising awkward questions and delivering alternative answers. It has the potential to bring into doubt premises, problematics (sets of questions and answers) and procedures which have, for too long, seemed beyond doubt, fixed, if not eternal 'truths'. But, given that 'the global determination' of this field of study lies beyond the intervention, a strategy content with negotiation will merely create a subordinate space. Energy will constantly have to be wasted on arguing the legitimacy of doing what either Alvarado or Williamson propose, again and again. It may seem obvious that no course on communication would be complete without some kind of sociological or social-psychological perspectives. This is definitely not the case with semiotics, let alone psychoanalytic theses on the formation of subjects.

And once the subordinate space has been obtained, what then? In these inter-disciplinary degree courses there is much talk of cross-referring and of the critical inspection of this or that problematic in the light of others. All this rhetoric usually occurs at the outset, before teaching actually begins. When it does what students are quite likely to encounter are a series of discrete and carefully policed pathways through the course. If knowledge is put at risk at all it is usually in ways designed to enhance its authority: it is rarely if at all subjected to really awkward questioning. And, of course, there is always the option of transforming theoretical (explanatory) and political oppositions into mere differences ('well on this question there are a number of perspectives . . . ') with all that attendant assumptions that one explanation is as good, as adequate, as the next.

I do not think that it is at all sufficient simply to discuss with students in my seminars the problems of the other orders of knowledge they have to confront on our course. For this is once again to off-load the problem on to the students and to leave them to make what critical connections they can. Presumably we find some of that other knowledge wrong or inadequate. Presumably Judith Williamson asks us to teach differently because she thinks other modes of teaching are authoritarian. Is it enough in light of this only to talk to students about their 'other' lectures, their fear of asking questions there and what this implied about the knowledge acquired there? Should we not, ourselves, take on some of

the responsiblity for tackling and questioning these 'other' teaching practices? If we think they are wrong or inadequate, why should students have to go on being subjected to them?

Another aspect of the discussion with which I have difficulty is the kind of teaching that is envisaged. Manuel Alvarado's[3] sounds pretty formidable and at times unproductively abstract. What Judith Williamson proposes seems, at first sight, easily more agreeable with its apparent emphasis on the concrete, the personal experiences of students and on relating the theoretical work to that.

However I begin to experience problems with her account, when she writes:

The idea of ideology as something we all participate in, underlies the first possibility of critical thought, because it shows that no ideas are 'given' or 'absolute'. Without the notion of cultural relativism, truly questioning thought is impossible, because our own premises are never questioned. The more I have taught in further education, the more I think it hardly matters, in a way, what you teach as long as it leads to this questioning which itself is a prerequisite for social change.[4]

Yet in the author's own account of her dealings with the boys in second year Graphic Options, there was little to suggest the presence of 'cultural relativism'. It seemed quite evident that Williamson was anything but relativist on the question of the boys' sexism, and it did not seem from that account that her premises, her understanding of sexism was at all at risk, open to questioning. Indeed in these respects the teaching seemed of a kind only too familiar. Space is allowed for students to put their experience on the line, only to have it put in crisis – questioned, anyway – by the teacher. Like Manual Alvarado, Judith Williamson takes experience, or some kinds of experience, to be inadequate. The aim of teaching is confrontationist: it is to break down what are seen as inadequate experiences, to mount against them 'an attack violent enough to create difficulty for them', to create, in short, 'personal – crises'.[5] If we assume that such an assault is successful, what then? What happens when the students move on to the next seminar or session? What prevents them, in the face of such an attack, from resorting to silent and sullen rebellion? Will they even come back? Where is the relativism in this kind of attack on students? Actually, I don't think there is any relativism at all. Rather the handling of the boys' sexism seemed quite authoritarian, reminiscent of certain Leninist theses about how to 'deal with' the spontaneous consciousness of errant workers.

I want to accept some of Judith Williamson's precepts, but I find it difficult to agree that it is wise or useful to proceed as if teaching situations were really ideological battlegrounds on which to take out those students that come to be classified as reactionary on whatever scale. I would like to think teaching could be a bit more productive than this, that questioning and even challenging could be mounted in ways that minimise the risk of refusal on the part of the students.

I would argue that our approaches must be rooted in the concrete, in lived experiences and in various kinds of common sense – not just those with which we feel most comfortable. In seminars space must be available for students to speak their own biographies, and here I recognise that this is a space that must be created. Some will have to be encouraged to speak while others will have to be encouraged to listen. At the same time we as teachers cannot always be the focal point: students have to be encouraged to address, to look at, one another and not always to speak to the member of staff. The aim of so doing, in my view, is to develop and encourage an understanding of the structure and structuring of that lived experience. It is *not* to smash it, to violently attack it, to put it down nor dismiss it as reactionary or ideological from a position which cannot appear as anything but one of confident certainty. Nor should the objective be to create difficulty, albeit of a somewhat different kind, but, if possible, to contribute something useful – an explanation or explanations perhaps – which might, just might, help transform the experience. Even if only the limits of a particular experience can be indicated that might be a help.

I do not think it is at all sufficient merely to promote critical, questioning thought, and to encourage, beyond a certain point, a sense of cultural relativism. It has been my experience,

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[3] eg Manuel Alvarado, 'Television Studies and Pedagogy', *Screen Education* no 38, Spring 1981, pp 56-67.

[4] Williamson, op cit, p 83.

[5] ibid.

both in a 'liberal studies' context and again in the context of degree work, that relativism is a major problem. All ideas, to many students, seem equally valid or, more frequently, invalid. 'Everybody has their own view, after all,' retort many others, and they presume each view to be as worthy as the next. Their essays are invariably littered with 'I believe/I think'. Frequently, as I suggested above, there is little in what I take to be mainstream teaching that puts such relativism into question. In the fact of it, one major task of teaching should be an attempt to demonstrate that cultures are social and objectively structured —that there are patterns of socio-cultural relations which have their basis in past and present practices, and which cannot be willed or defined away.

It also strikes me as quite dishonest to suggest that the aims of teaching are the inculcation of a sense of relativism and the promotion of critical, questioning thought. Judith Williamson wants to suggest that she has, with considerable difficulty, effort and pain no doubt, come up with some kind of *answers* to the problems she has outlined; not hard-and-fast answers, held with 'that theoretician's sense of rightness', but working certainties held and advocated with a considerable measure of confidence nonetheless. Clearly she has something more than criticisms and questions to offer. Her own lectures and written work don't suggest that she is caught in the inactivity and dispersed undertainty of the 'personal crisis' she seems to think has to be imposed on at least some students. So, is this a stage or process that she has undergone too, and like her, will students come through it to propose answers as well?

A major problem in all this is that students are already bearers of answes, of working certainties too, and theirs not infrequently happen to be quite different from, if not opposed to, ours. If these are to be explicitly challenged in a teaching situation, then the critical traffic cannot all be one-way. Certainly students should be aware that their views and actions are essentially contestable, but they should be aware that ours are too. This really does mean making it possible for students, no matter how 'arrogant and cocksure' to argue back and propose their solutions in preference to ours. They will anyway, outside our seminars and classrooms. If we do not construct the situation in a way that enables two-way traffic, then all we may be fostering is a cynical detachment – or a potentially more dangerous alternative given the present Government's views on higher and further education, namely reinforcing the mythology of the 'critical lefty lecturer'. Such characters are, according to Mrs Thatcher's speech to the 1975 Conservative Party Conference, 'under the shelter of our education system, ruthlessly attacking the minds of the young'.

By all means then let us root our teaching in living experiences, recognise that there will be differences and that the explanations we offer of them are controversial and likely to provoke disagreement. How might we productively organise these disagreements and differences? I would hope not violently, repressively, which seems to me all too easy a course of action, and as I've just tried to indicate, quite possibly one that will prove counterproductive. In relation to this question, I though Len Masterman's an important observation when he wrote that 'probably the most important task in working with working class pupils' (though why only them?) 'is to raise awareness of the potentialities of group action and group solidarity, to work out co-operative strategies for tapping the resources of a group and to develop legitimate channels through which dissent might be constructively expressed.'[6] I would suggest that this sets out the basics of strategy not just for schools but for higher education also.

There are indeed no easy routes to the acquisition of this 'political literacy', but to attempt something of the sort strikes me as potentially more productive than violently attacking those with whom we rightly take issue. To pursue a co-operative strategy does not mean, in my view, that we must not disagree, bite-our-tongues and let blokes of the kind Judith Williamson speaks of get 'away with it. But everything depends upon the way in which issue is taken. This is all the more crucial given the context in which we are trying to develop this political literacy. If we are to get tough with anyone maybe it would be better to do so with those who are attempting to deconstruct higher education and to recompose it in a more authoritarian form. If we do not, then we may well find ourselves without any spaces or positions to transform at all.

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[6] Len Masterman, 'TV Pedagogy', *Screen Education* no 40, Autumn/Winter 1981/2, p 91.

STATE HEROES FOR THE EIGHTIES

RICHARD PATERSON AND PHILIP SCHLESINGER EXPLORE IMAGES OF THE SAS

Then the impossible happened with appalling suddenness.

The entire wall of the living room burst inwards and two figures in black launched themselves through the hole . . . [1]

The seventies have seen the creation by extremists of every political persuasion of a potential battlefield in every part of the civilised world. As a result of a real or imagined collective injustice, such extremists claim a licence to kill, imprison and mutilate people totally uninvolved in their private · quarrel. Such extremists, and their apologists in universities, the communications media and mainstream politics have made atrocities a norm of political protest. The SAS, which has probably saved more lives than it has taken during its existence . . . has responded to the terrorist threat with patience as well as cunning and skill at arms. [2]

THIS PAPER FOCUSES on the range of representations of the SAS – Britain's Special Air Services Regiment. The figure of the SAS-soldier is found in a variety of cultural products: film, television news and current affairs programmes, television fictions and entertainment programmes, books (both novels and factual histories), cartoons, advertisements and children's toys. Since the Iranian Embassy siege of 1980 the SAS's image has been *naturalised* as a force of state superheroes. Within a very short period a set of commonsense understandings about the SAS has been developed in the popular consciousness. This range of

[1] James Follett, from the frontispiece of the novel that 'inspired' *Who Dares Wins: The Tiptoe Boys*, London, Corgi books, 1982.

[2] Tony Geraghty, *This is the SAS*, London, Arms and Armour Press, 1982.

3 Cary Bazalgette and Richard Paterson, 'Real Entertainment', *Screen Education* no 37, Winter 1980/81, pp 55-67.

understandings is itself dependent on existing histories of the representation of superheroes, and the places in the media where these are to be found. However, specific to the SAS is the novelty of its eruption onto the domestic political scene and the model of effective action it embodies for Britain in the eighties. In our view the growing naturalisation of the SAS in British culture is a particularly clear-cut example of how that culture is developing under 'Thatcherism'.

The Iranian Embassy Siege

The SAS's leap into national and international prominence came with their 'busting' of the Iranian Embassy siege in May 1980. Men in black appeared, as if from nowhere, and ended a siege that had lasted for six days. Magical agents of the state appeared, then vanished back into their mysterious secret world. In an earlier paper[3] Bazalgette and Paterson traced the narrativisation of the Embassy siege, and the invocation of elements from fiction which so constructed the story that its end was no surprise. The consequences of the siege bust altered the field of representations of British society by promoting the myth of men in black. Thereafter that figure became representative of British efficiency and was trumpeted forth in the government's rhetoric of praise for exemplary action carried out by cool professionals. The image draws on the archetype of the masked avenger which has such a long history, and has quickly oriented a whole contemporary mythology based on documentary and fictional accounts.

May 1980: men in black end the Iranian Embassy siege before the television cameras.
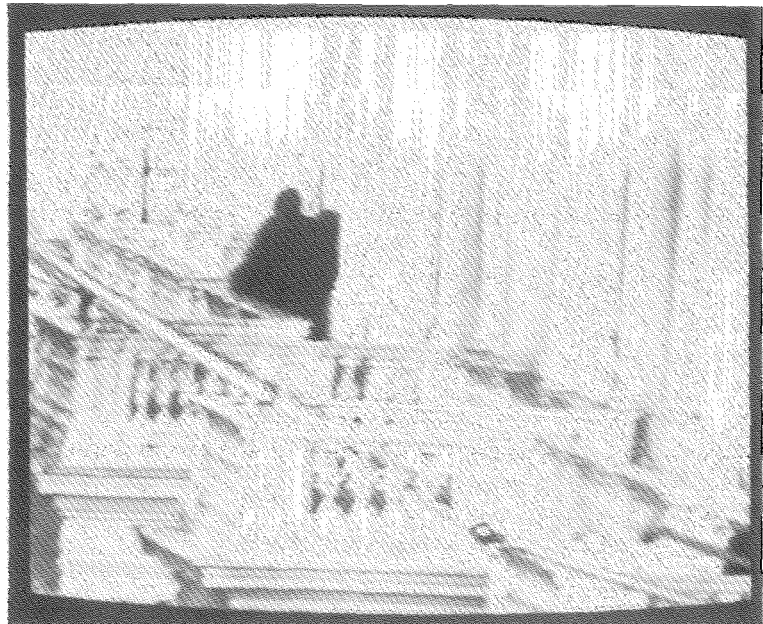
Schlesinger has suggested that the violent ending of the siege was a significant moment in the drift towards a more authoritarian British state.[4] Now, with hindsight, it seems to have signalled the growing militarisation of the civil society and the elaboration of martial patriotism.[5] That the imagery of military success was to be reinvoked so quickly and so greatly expanded with the Falklands adventure could not be forecast. It has, however, allowed the SAS as a concentrated symbol of British potency to be revived and set to the task of representing 'Britain at its best'.

We have detailed elsewhere the ramifications of the Embassy siege in terms of media politics and state security. Here, we consider the development of its imagery and what possible 'meanings' this holds for the British public.

It is perhaps worthwhile to note the curious affair of the coroner's verdict on the deaths in the Embassy and the trial of the surviving terrorist. The trial ended in late January 1981, with unexpected haste, when the prosecution decided to accept his plea of the manslaughter of two hostages. One of the unresolved issues was the claim by several witnesses that gunmen who had thrown down their arms had been shot by the SAS who entered the building after one hostage had been killed. This problem was central to the coroner's inquest, held early the following month. The coroner played a very direct role, invoking for the jury the 'implications to this country if a verdict of unlawful killing were to be recorded'. He depicted the context of the action in a way that limited any consideration of alternatives: 'Imagine them [the SAS] peering through smoke and seeing the enemy, and ask yourself whether it's reasonable to shoot first and ask questions afterwards.'[6] The coroner also dismissed certain details – such as how far the muzzle of the pistol had been from one terrorist's head – as unimportant. The evidence of non-British witnesses, it was suggested, was confused because of language difficulties. The jury took what the coroner evidently regarded as an unpatriotic 45 minutes to return a verdict of 'justifiable homicide'.

The documentary *Hostage* (BBC1, 22.1.81), transmitted after the trial of the surviving gunman, largely side-stepped the killings. Consequently, the hostages recounted an incomplete tale: rescued by the super-heroes they could not tell all about the execution of the gunmen. But in their subsequent book, *Hostage*, Chris Cramer and Sim Harris, the two BBC men taken captive in the embassy, do deal with the issue quite explicitly. From their account, it appears that after having panicked at the outset of the SAS raid, and having killed one further hostage and wounded others, four of the gunmen threw down their arms. What next resulted was 'one of the most controversial incidents involving the British army in post war years. Accounts from some of the hostages differ greatly from police and army evidence given at the subsequent Old Bailey trial of one of the gunmen and the inquest into the deaths of the other five.' In the book, Cramer and Harris do not formally assess the 'conflicting accounts', although the *prima facie* evidence they put together does point strongly in the direction of summary execution by

[4] Philip Schlesinger, 'Princes' Gate, 1980: The Media Politics of Siege Management', *Screen Education* no 37, Winter 1980/81, pp 29-54. Republished in J L Currey and J R Dassin (eds), *Press Control Around the World*, New York, Praeger, 1982.

[5] For some relevant considerations see Eric Hobsbawm, 'Falklands Fallout', *Marxism Today*, January 1983, pp 13-19.

[6] Dr Paul Knapman, quoted in Anne McHardy, 'Coroner Warns Jury – "Think of Britain"', the *Guardian*, February 5, 1981.

[7] *Hostage*, John Clare Books, London, 1982, quotations from pp 163; 186. The press conference was reported by Susan Tirbutt, 'Embassy Hostage "Saw SAS Kill Tourist"', the *Guardian*, April 30, 1982.

[8] A point made by Graham Knight and Tony Dean, 'Myth and the Structure of News', *Journal of Communication*, Spring 1982, pp 144-161.

[9] 'The Myth of Superman' in *The Role of the Reader*, London, Hutchinson, 1979, p 110.

the SAS: 'At least two ... were shot dead by the soldiers, apparently after surrendering the throwing down their weapons and grenades.' During the press conference which launched the book, Sim Harris observed 'I believe they were told to go into the embassy, get the hostages alive and deal with the terrorists. I think they were told to take no prisoners.'[7] There was very little public disquiet at the virtual assassination of men who had thrown down their arms; and the curtailment of the trial after some of these allegations became public seemed intended to maintain the SAS's public credibility. The state needs to ensure that they are perceived as superheroes, not as a group of licensed assassins. Any sense of ambiguity about their role, any moral equation of terror with counter-terror, raises basic problems for the legitimacy of the means employed to guarantee the democratic order.[8] This doubt has appeared fleetingly, and may explain the appeal of humorous representations: laughing at that which is feared.

Superheroes and the Cult of Secrecy

Overall, the SAS retains the unimpaired image of archetypal super-heroes. Like Superman, in the words of Umberto Eco, they are 'immobi-lised in an emblematic and fixed nature which renders [them] easily recognisable'[9]; they appear repeatedly in different narratives and in different cultural products. These appearances have a certain redundancy, but they permit the pleasures of repetition to be invoked. The SAS acts as an unknown *collective* agent. Unlike Superman, who as Clark Kent possesses a specific identity, the SAS has no 'known' side. It is a collective hero, and consequently de-individualised. Its actions key into the present vogue for simplistic political solutions and actions of Britain in the '80s.

The identification engendered and encouraged by the mode of representation of the SAS as a secret body, dedicated to the defence of the state while basking in anonymity, is fundamentally anti-democratic. Public identification is encouraged with military figures who lack individuality, accountability, and masquerade in the uniforms of masked avengers. Their legitimacy is assumed but not discussed.

Although SAS mythology is integrally based in its enigmatic public face this is by no means a universal feature of analogous counter-insurgency troops. At no time during the Embassy siege bust were the secret terms on which the SAS is permitted to function questioned; in fact, in terms of the presentation this orientation was reinforced. The use of a figure in shadow in a *Nationwide* interview (BBC1, 6.5.80) with a former SAS chief who explained the operation replicated the anonymity of the bust. At the inquest the soldiers were identified by the use of initials, such as 'HH', 'J', 'LL', 'S'.

In complete contrast, both the French GIGN and the West German GSG9 have chosen publicity and high profile. In the former case, the commander, Captain Christian Prouteau, is known and interviewable

(ITN *News at Ten*, 1.6.81), in the later, the commander, Ulrich Wegener, is a well-known face who is said to 'enjoy the limelight' [10]. Wegener's background as a scion of a military family, his passion for classical music and hero-worship of Frederick the Great are on public record. He is a humanised figure who has been photographed with leading politicians such as Genscher and Schmidt. Indeed, in Rolf Tophoven's celebration of GSG9, the author explicitly warns against the creation of Bond-like superheroes, and states that the taxpayers ought to be given the facts and analysis which will show them how well their Deutsche Marks are being spent.[11] What this comparison suggests is that secrecy is not inevitable, nor is it essential to security. It is obviously an aspect of how the SAS myth is *styled*, and, arguably, derives from the cult of secrecy which afflicts British government and public life: it has all the attractions of *Smiley's People*[12].

Running counter to the myth of secrecy is the SAS's creation-story, which is strongly centered upon the larger-than-life personality of its founder Colonel David Stirling DSO, OBE – undoubtedly in his time an unorthodox fighting man. In World War Two Stirling side-stepped the military bureaucracy and conventional thinking about the role of commandos by arguing for the deployment of small, highly-specialised groupings of four men capable of devastatingly effective attacks behind enemy lines.

He re-entered public prominence in the mid-seventies when the *Guardian* and *Peace News* revealed the existence of his paramilitary organisation, GB75 – one of several groupings at the time to organise against 'the threat from the Left', although it did claim political neutrality. On GB75's agenda was strike-breaking in factories, power-stations and sewage plants, activities which were prophetically planned to include the use of helicopters for avoiding the problem of passing through picket-lines. Stirling was well aware of the potential injury that his association with GB75 could do his former regiment, as he noted in a memorandum to his members a month prior to the story coming out: 'It is also essential, before GB75 attracts publicity, to find a leader to take over from me because my name and association with the SAS Regiment etc. could only damage its prospects.'[13]

Rather less well-known is Stirling's work as an organiser of mercenaries, and as an employer of ex-SAS men. He has specialised in offering military protection through a recruiting organisation called Watchguard. There has, moreover, often been a measure of ambiguity about the extent of official involvement in his activities by the British state. The best known instance, perhaps, occurred in 1970 during the botched 'Hilton Assignment', in which an attempt was made to overthrow Libya's Colonel Khaddafi.[14]

In and Out of History

There is a sense in which the SAS as *presently* understood by the wider public have only entered history in Mrs Thatcher's Britain. What is

[10] Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, *Terror! The West Fights Back*, London, Macmillan, 1982, p 116

[11] Rolf Tophoven, *GSG9: Kommando gegen Terrorismus*, Koblenz/Bonn, Verlag Wehr und Wissen, 1977.

[12] For recent explorations of this issue, see David Leigh, *The Frontiers of Secrecy*, London, Junction Books, 1980; and James Michael, *The Politics of Secrecy*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1982.

[13] Quoted in Martin Walker, 'Open File', the *Guardian* April 23, 1974.

[14] See Tony Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, Fontana/Collins, 1982, Ch 4, esp pp 124-125. For a more critical look at the episode see Roger Faligot, *Guerre Spéciale en Europe*, Paris, Flammarion, 1980, pp 47-49.

[15] *The Special Air Service*, London, William Kimber, 1971.

[16] The first quotation is from Faligot, op cit, pp 43-44. The interview is in Roger Faligot, *Nons Aven Tué Mountbatten: L'IRA Parle*, Paris, Editions Jean Picollec 1981; quotation from p 74. Translated by Philip Schlesinger.

unique to the Thatcherite appropriation of the Service is its insistence upon national pride in military achievement, and its consequent interpellation of the British public into a model of British muscularity. For this purpose, the SAS needs no history: it requires only a contemporary and efficacious presence.

But the SAS do have a history, one of which they are immensely proud, as their main biographers, Philip Warner[15] and Tony Geraghty, testify. Its trajectory has taken them from being a special force during the decolonisation process to fighting a 'dirty war' at home, most importantly in Northern Ireland. This history is principally accessible, however, not through the mass media, but either through regimental or popularised and pictorialised military history. The Geraghty book, *Who Dares Wins*, was initially published in hardback by Arms and Armour Press in 1980. In paperback it was published by Fontana in 1981, and by November 1982 had sold 250,000 copies and was selling steadily at about 9,000-10,000 per month. The pictorial history *This is the SAS* was published in the summer of 1982 by Arms and Armour Press, and soon entered the *Sunday Times* best-selling hardback lists. These are very substantial books sales, although considerably less than a television audience.

Alongside this quasi-official and largely apologetic history is a counter-history which is hardly known at all. One exponent, Roger Faligot, has remarked: 'The founding of the SAS is generally thought of as happening during World War Two. In fact, the SAS's roots dig far more deeply into British history: it is a history of private armies, organised and staffed by the ruling class in order to protect its interests, and mainly in order to crush the Irish rebels.' Such a perspective is utterly remote from most contemporary discussion.

Equally at variance with the current mythologies is the ironic and quasi-humorous description of the SAS as full of bunglers which came from a Provisional IRA source during an interview with Roger Faligot:

They project the idea of an elite force, of professionals who are very precise in their operations against isolated groups of terrorists. But in actual fact when it comes to facing up to a popular movement, their technical skill doesn't really count too much. That's what we've established in Ireland. Here, they've distinguished themselves for a large number of fiascos which have often embarrassed London. We've had incidents due to map-reading errors at the border, when a dozen of these experts found themselves south of the border, in plain clothes, with fire arms...

But errors can also be lethal:

In their policy of selective assassination of Republican suspects, the SAS have killed more civilians than IRA men.[16]

Such perceptions, while central to a culture of political resistance in Ireland, are at the very boundaries of political argument in Britain. How-

ever, as we shall see, they do come through in the very ambiguity with which the SAS is sometimes represented.

Before the Siege

The SAS was hardly ever a major focus of media attention prior to the Iranian Embassy siege, and consequently no 'trademark' identification comparable to 'the men in black' existed. The shroud of secrecy was momentarily cast aside by Harold Wilson in January 1976 when he announced that the SAS had been sent to Northern Ireland. In fact, as most commentators have noted, the SAS had operated there since 1969.

The representations which did emerge prior to the siege suggested a presence, but one which was discreet and marginal. One interesting moment, in a way a prefiguration of the siege, was the Balcombe Street incident in 1975, when, as the story has it, the mere mention of the SAS led to the IRA men's surrender. In a dramatised reconstruction, *18 Months to Balcombe Street* (London Weekend Television, 19.2.77) the narrative traces the movements and actions of the IRA unit up to the siege, at which point the programme ends. No mention is made of the SAS—it was still hidden from history, as the context for its 'historicisation' was yet to come.

Another incident was the successful freeing of hostages from a Lufthansa aircraft by GSG9 at Mogadishu in Somalia in 1977. If we consider how 'Hijack to Mogadishu' in the drama-documentary series *Escape* (BBC1, 19.9.80) dealt with the role of the SAS we once again derive a sense of its presence prior to the Embassy siege. The references are oblique: 'There are two British officers here . . .'; the specially manufactured 'stun grenades' are mentioned too. But the experts are off-stage, heard about but not seen. It is hard to imagine that had the programme been made—as opposed to transmitted—a year later, *after* the Embassy siege, the SAS's aid to GSG9 would not have been hyped. Tony Geraghty notes, in precisely such an heroic register, that Major Morrison and Sergeant Davies 'had become de facto members of Wegener's team' and that the attack plan was 'composed by the SAS team.'[17]

After the Siege

One of the first uses of the image of men in black after the Iranian Embassy siege came with the opening sequence of the 'Wild Justice' episode of *The Professionals* action series (London Weekend Television, 14.9.80). As Bazalgette and Paterson have noted,[18] this continuing confusion of fact and fiction, and the active engagement of our pleasure through the process of repetition and recognition, is important ideologically. In 'Wild Justice' the characters Bodie and Doyle, and their elite secret service organisation CI5, are placed in the same interpretive framework as the SAS, through the siege-busting motif. The subsequent

[17] Tony Geraghty, *op cit*, pp 230-231

[18] Cary Bazalgette and Richard Paterson, op cit.

September 1980: a
fictional siege bust in
London Weekend
Television's *The
Professionals*.
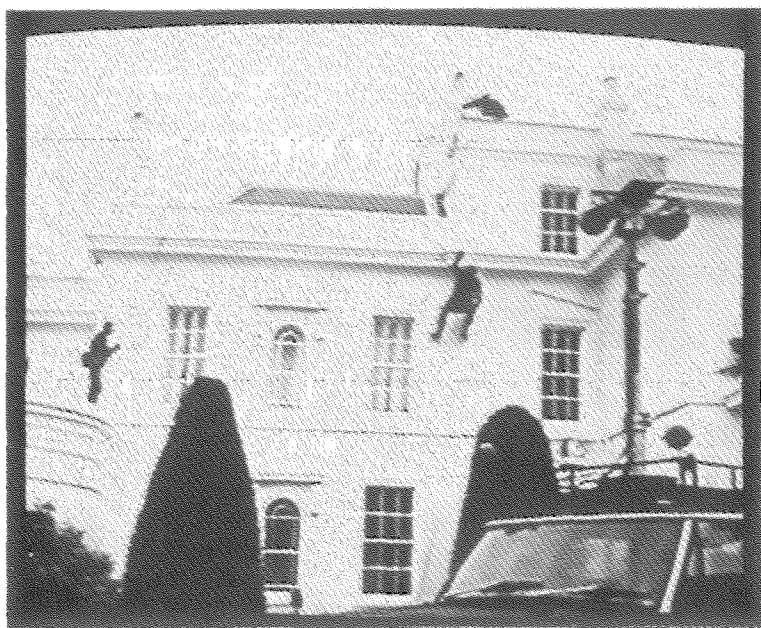
narrative concentrates on the need for constant training to maintain the
ability to overcome the most difficult problems in defence of democracy.

However, by making the 'fictive' CI5 and the 'real' SAS equivalent,
the programme offers us an altered perception of *both*. The far-fetched
patriotic deeds in the series were made more plausible by the derring-do
of the SAS, while, conversely, the sort of heroes on offer in the series
could be projected onto the real-world exploits of the Regiment. The
eventual casting of Lewis Collins (Bodie) in *Who Dares Wins* demon-
strates interestingly the producers' acknowledgment and encouragement
of this cross-referencing.

A further dramatisation in the wake of the siege was *No Names . . . No
Medals: A Story of the SAS*, a fiction drama performed at the Jeanetta
Cochrane Theatre in London during February 1981. The play featured
the men in black and a storming of a building and much of its focused on
the SAS's military training: the programme credited 'two anonymous
military experts'.

Two months after the trial of the surviving gunman and the inquest
into the deaths at the Embassy, and almost a year after the siege, the
'SAS' appeared on television – in a comedy series. For some time *The
Kenny Everett Video Show* had been the object of criticism from Mary
Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association for its
'naughty bits'. This particular programme (Thames, 17.4.81) opens
with the continuity announcer declaring that it is cancelled due to cen-
sorship. Three men dressed in commando outfits then burst onto the set,
two abseiling on ropes and Everett himself exploding through the
Thames logo backdrop. To theme music from James Bond and the bran-
dishing of sub-machine guns, Everett puts a video cassette onto a
recorder and the programme continues . . .

April 1981: Kenny Everett retakes his own *Video Show* in commando gear.

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In early 1982 the second episode of *Whoops Apocalypse* (London Weekend Television, 21.3.82) also featured the SAS image. In many ways this sequence is most difficult to analyse in terms of its effectivity and 'meaning'. The role of the SAS in a narrative about the lunacies of governments and the world stumbling into nuclear war is at first glance another case of offering up media images to be laughed at. The audience addressed by the series is assumed to be competent at reading parodies of media forms – an American newscast, a Presidential advertisement, *News at Ten* – and to have a quite sophisticated understanding of international politics. Indeed, the Appreciation Index measured by the IBA indicated a liking for the programme by a particular audience (the young middle classes) and a distaste for it on the part of the old and working class audiences.[19] The introduction of the figures in black to secure the Shah on a British cross-Channel ferry on the orders of a Left-wing Labour government whose Prime Minister considers himself to be Superman is bizarre. Perhaps the action is intended to invoke a comic echo of an incident in 1972 when an SAS soldier was part of a team parachuted on the QE2 to deal with what turned out to be a bomb hoax. Here the SAS seem ready to 'take out' the Shah. Appearing as if from nowhere in the toilets where he is hiding – affording us that familiar pleasure in shock and recognition – they proceed to break the place up. One bangs his head against a mirror, another gets his foot stuck in a toilet door. Next, they succeed in killing one of their own men engaged in flushing out the Shah – who is in the next cubicle, unharmed.

In acting in this way the comedy calls on our understanding of what the SAS are: an elite force trained to kill at close quarters, while showing them as clumsy, incompetent and unsuccessful. The leader's complaint about the loss of his friend and the brutality of his comrades also inserts a

[19] IBA Audience Research Department, *Audience Appreciation Report*, South and South-East England, Week 13/82, March 29-April 4, 1982, p 11.

March 1982: the SAS destroy a shipboard lavatory in *Whoops Apocalypse.*
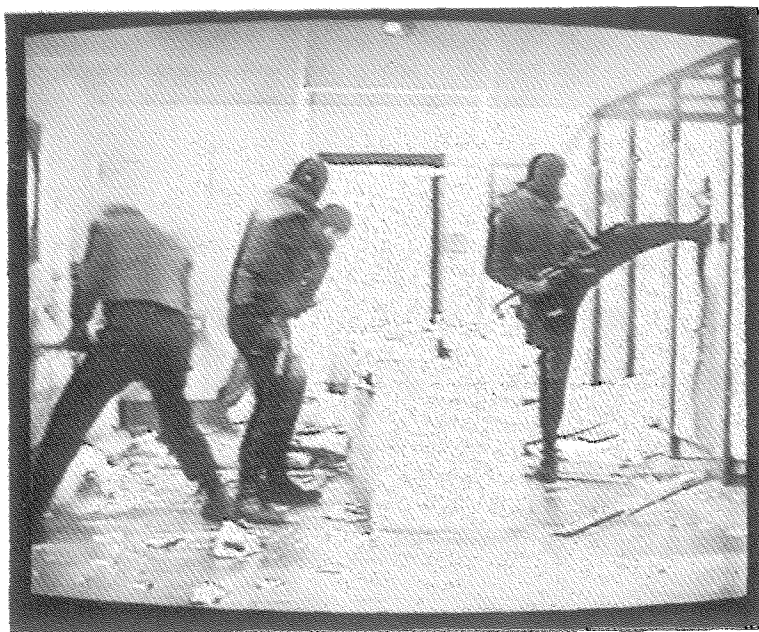
sense of the clinical ruthlessness. What, however, presents considerable difficulty is to judge the audience's reaction to such anarchic humour: no political position is clearly set out in the series as a whole.

Perhaps less ambiguous were the references to the SAS in Jasper Carrott's comedy show *Carrott's Lib* (BBC-1, 13.11.82). In one short scene Mr and Mrs Molloy visit the doctor; Mr Molloy sits back to camera as his wife complains that she can't get any sexual satisfaction from him. She explains that her husband is in the SAS and 'as you know, they're trained to get in and out without anybody noticing'. The programme – the last in the series – concludes with yet another variant of the SAS bursting in. This time, however, it's men in white, and utterly ridiculous ones at that. Carrott, noted for his regular dismissive jibes at the newspaper, is 'attacked' by a *Sun* readers' hit squad who abseil into the studio sporting white balaclavas and combat gear, each with a pair of rosy tits sported on the front. The *Sun* readers run the gamut of military incompetence – for instance, having sawn off the stock rather than the barrel of a shotgun – and conclude their protest by hustling Carrott off into the night, to be driven away in a waiting car. Carrott's programme clearly laughs at the simple-minded use of force and at the sexual incompetence of the superhero.

The Politics of Humour

What is the effect of the humorous representation of the SAS? Does it do something more than add to the naturalisation of their image, their pres-

ence in British society and its culture? One possible interpretation is that the sketch as discussed above provides a vehicle for the catharsis of fears – the situation is to be laughed at, but with a proper measure of apprehension. However, one could also see humour as domesticating a threatening image, and undercutting it, thereby subverting it, at least superficially. How it is 'read' is obviously not simple to analyse. In the case of *Whoops Apocalypse* the series' self-distancing from media hype, misgovernment and political incompetence frames this particular representation of inefficient superheroes. The audience is asked to laugh at a sequence of satirical sketches in a narrative that leads to Armageddon.

This raises more general questions about the political impact of satire, and of the narrative as a whole. It must be said that the politics of humour has been addressed infrequently in critical studies.[20] In this case, beyond the question of whether laughter at the social and moral contradictions vitiates criticism, there is a need to assess the impact of a visual motif which has developed a powerful meaning in the national culture, but is undercut by the clumsiness and incompetence of the SAS's action. By giving absurd voice to the mute and anonymous superheroes who are normally shielded by secrecy in the real world, the possibility of identification with the archetype is reduced. The image is naturalised, but it is also demythologised by breaking down the anonymity in ways that render it risible.

Who Dares Wins

With *Who Dares Wins*, the feature film produced by Euan Lloyd, the SAS-as-superheroes motif received its full all-action elaboration. Within hours of the siege-bust taking place, Lloyd had registered three titles with the Motion Pictures Association of America. These were 'SAS', 'SAS Regiment' and the one eventually used, the Regimental motto 'Who Dares Wins'. A couple of weeks after Princes' Gate, Lloyd observed 'I was thrilled by the live action on the television, and proud that it was happening in Britain. I'm determined that this should be a British film, as it was a British triumph.'[21] This view was much in line with the rhetoric of Thatcherite populism, both at the time of the siege and, more fully orchestrated, during the Falklands Adventure.

Lloyd engaged Ian Sharp, a director of *The Professionals*, to direct *Who Dares Wins*. Out of the same stable came Lewis Collins (who plays Bodie) to take the starring role of Captain Peter Skellen. The screenplay, as in previous Lloyd productions (eg *Sea Wolves*, *Wild Geese*), was written by a writer credited with a past in British intelligence. The storyline, also followed broadly in the James Follett novelisation, *The Tiptoe Boys*, is to say the least, highly controversial, as it concerns the manipulation of the anti-nuclear 'People's Lobby' – for which, read CND – by a group of terrorists in Libyan pay.

Of no little significance was the decision consciously to take on board and project the SAS's myth of secrecy. The selection of Lewis Collins

[20] See, however, Jim Cook (ed) *BFI Dossier 17: Television Sitcom*, BFI, 1982. The essays by Terry Lovell, 'A Genre of Social Disruption?' and Gillian Swanson, 'Law and Disorder' are especially relevant.

[21] Quoted in Adrian Hodges, 'Lloyd Announces SAS Film', *Screen International*, May 17, 1980.

[22] Quoted in Colin Vaines, 'New Faces for $8m Adventure', March 13, 1982.

was rationalised by Lloyd in the following way: 'This film couldn't have a big star for the simple reason that the SAS is a faceless, enigmatic force, and to cast Roger Moore as Captain Skellen would be totally wrong.'[22] (Collins, moreover, was an ideal figure: a member of the Parachute Regiment TAVR for some years, an expert rifle and pistol shot, trained in unarmed combat, a black belt in ju-jitsu, he'd once even tried to join the SAS.[23] The actor will also star in Lloyd's next movie, *Task Force South*, based on the activities of the Special Boat Service during the Falklands Adventure.[24])

August 1982: *Who Dares Wins* opens just after the Falklands War.
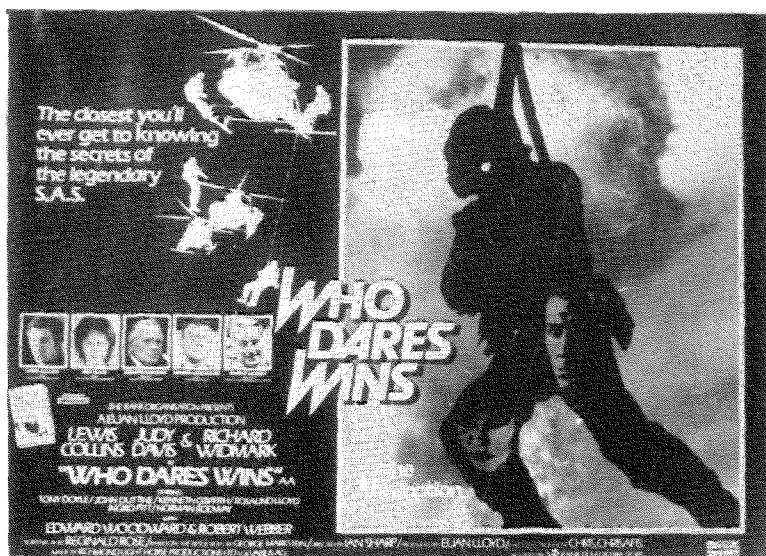
[23] See *Screen International*, August 22 and 29, 1981; and Nigel Fountain, 'Who Dares? Who Wins?' *City Limits*, August 27, 1982.

The publicity material sets out the narrative dilemma of *Who Dares Wins* in the following way:

The film encapsulates the problem in one extreme confrontation between a radical anti-nuclear faction and the SAS. On the one side are campaigners for peace, willing to resort to terror tactics. Against them are violent, ruthless men, committed to stamp out terror with terror.

[24] the *Sun*, August 7, 1982; the *Standard*, May 14, 1982.

But if various other public statements are to be believed, the production team had somewhat differing perceptions of the film's theme. Director Ian Sharp thought the nuclear issue one which the audience could identify with as opposed to the obscure motivation of those who had seized the Iranian Embassy; however, he expected an ambivalent attitude towards the SAS's role. Euan Lloyd is quoted in the film publicity as saying: 'Arguments are presented but by no means resolved. We highlight a murderous confrontation between anti-nuclear activists whose violence is matched by the SAS. We cannot and do not draw conclusions.' Of course, such apparent and quite spurious agnosticism is possible only if the implausible scenario of such equal opposites is accep-

ted. For his part, George Markstein, who dreamed up the scenario, had
no such doubts. CND's complaints about a smear-campaign were
refuted by his allegations about 'funny, smelly people on the fringe of
the anti-nuclear movement' and, as for an ambivalent response, well 'it's
a film about terrorism. I don't give a damn what their cause is.'[25] This
indiscriminate view of 'terrorism as pathology threatening the state and
the Free World as we know it' is typically within the province of counter-
insurgency thought.[26] Lloyd, less disingenously, also maintained that
the peace movement and CND were dominated by Left-subversives and
financed by Moscow.[27] The techniques used – intercutting a CND
demonstration with shots of the film's own extras, together with the use
of CND symbols – could hardly mean that the association was unin-
tended.

Otherwise, the situation is different from the Iranian siege bust in
nearly every way possible. To allow the 'identification' mentioned by
Ian Sharp, the hostages are mainly American, with some British. Is this
to be explained by the force of marketing pressures? The 'terrorists' are
mainly British, with a beautiful American (Frankie) and a villainous
Rosa Kleb-style East German (Helga) thrown in for good measure. The
reductio ad absurdum of peacenik terrorism is their attempt to demon-
strate the lunacy of nuclear wars by firing a missile at Scotland.

The portrayal of the CND as a potential terrorist recruiting ground
and the use of the SAS as the agents of state order clearly define the
ideological framework within which the narrative is worked through.
We are presented with two 'real' organisations in a fiction, and a political
interpretation by the audience is invited using the motivations and
identification with the central character, Skellen. The text closes off
ways of looking at the handling of political violence. There is no hesi-
tation about the calling in of the SAS, no ambiguity about right and
wrong – it is a heavily loaded message, a closed text.[28]

When the SAS is called in it is not, as with the Iranian Embassy siege,
an incursion from nowhere. They are explicitly involved in the various
levels of the story: Skellen and others act as undercover agents, there are
recurrent training scenes, the SAS are involved in high-level discussions.
The creation of a psychologically motivated hero, Skellen, offers a point
of identification for the audience. What the plot allows is the invocation,
once more, of that symbolic reference point of the earlier 'live' siege bust
on the television screen. *Who Dares Wins* reinforces an existing myth-
ology, while also adding to it. The hoardings outside the cinema pro-
claimed: 'The closest you'll ever get behind the scenes.' The hero is
tough and resolute like all SAS men, but he is not one of the men in
black. This mythology is retained as it is they, the anonymous, efficient
professionals, who end the siege, not Skellen. At this point Skellen has
become too humanised to kill Frankie without hesitation. It is almost as
if the individual cannot be an SAS-hero, being contaminated by traits of
emotion and individuality, imposed by the generic factors of spy thrillers
(the moll, suspicions, duplicity, awaiting the blowing of the cover) and
the coherence required in narrative realism. For this narrative the arche-

[25] Nigel Fountain, op
cit.

[26] As argued in
Philip Schlesinger,
'On the Shape and
Scope of Counter-
Insurgency
Thought', in G
Littlejohn et al
(eds), *Power and
the State*, London,
Croom Helm,
1978.

[27] Martyn Auty,
'SAS vs CND',
Time Out, August
27, 1982.

[28] For a related
analysis of closed
and open texts see
Philip Elliott,
Graham Murdock,
Philip Schlesinger,
'The State and
"Terrorism" on
British
Television',
*L'immagine
dell'Uomo*, no 1,
January-April
1982, pp 77-130.

29 *Screen International,* December 11, 1982, noted that *Who Dares Wins* achieved the second highest Eady payment of £19,823 up to September 25, 1982: it had been registered just a few weeks earlier on August 12, 1982. *Chariots of Fire* registered on March 24, 1981, produced a levy of £32,056.

30 Quoted in 'War-Games on the Fearless', the *Sunday Times,* October 17, 1982.

31 Robert Harris, *Gotcha! The Media, the Government and the Falklands Crisis,* London, Faber and Faber, 1983.

typal SAS hero represented by the men in black motif remains outside the action, to be called upon once Skellen has completed his task.

The film's contrived and formulaic plot uses the hero's task – to discover where the People's Lobby will act – to achieve its coherence. It is interesting to compare it with the book that 'inspired' the film, *The Tiptoe Boys.* There, an American Ranger's involvement is crucial to the ending of the siege, as his experience in Vietnam is called upon after initial unsuccessful SAS attack, in which a large number are killed. In the film he, and a lieutenant from GSG9, are seen learning from the SAS. We can only speculate that the portrayal in the book was out of keeping with Euan Lloyd's patriotic project. It is certainly out of keeping with the dominant notion of the SAS's superheroic deed recycled by the media.

In terms of audience appeal, *Who Dares Wins* has done very well at the box office, due no doubt in part to its fortuitous release in August 1982, just after the Falklands War amidst a wave of patriotic fervour. It has been financially very successful, and was given a sure touch of respectability by its Royal Charity Premiere in August 1982.[29]

The Falklands Adventure

The SAS's image as super-soldiers was enhanced by their exploits during the Falklands campaign. Their outlook on taking South Georgia, with all its attendant difficulties, was described by one British observer as 'We're the SAS, we can walk on water.'[30] Various errors were made before the SAS, after walking unscathed through an Argentinian minefield, were the first to accept the surrender. The Regiment was also of crucial importance, together with the Royal Marines' Special Boat Service (SBS), in reconnoitring Argentine positions on the Falklands and in setting up diversions. The three most noteworthy operations by the SAS mentioned in the Granada/ITN videocassette *Battle for the Falklands* were the raid by 48 men on Pebble Island when they destroyed many aircraft, the taking of South Georgia, and the covert operations around Argentinian airbases revealed by the crashed Sea King helicopter in Chilean territory. To promote their heroics, the SAS made their own satellite communications system available to a sympathetic journalist, the *Standard*'s Max Hastings, circumventing the Ministry of Defence's 'minders', especially after the loss of 18 men in a helicopter accident and their need for 'good news' to boost morale.[31]

After the war was over, the naturalisation of SAS mythology continued apace. During the televised *National Salute* (ITV, 18.7.82) all branches of the armed forces which had served in the Falklands were represented by small detachments. Except for the SAS, that is, which, in Laurence Olivier's words, were 'here in spirit . . .' and, absent heroes, rapturously applauded. Secrecy and self-effacement remained a part of the understanding available to the general public. This anonymous recognition of service was quite in keeping with what had happened after the Iranian

Embassy siege, when five unidentified SAS men were awarded gallantry medals. It was repeated in October 1982, when the medal awards for the Falklands campaign were announced. In the television news programmes there were black silhouettes for the unnamed SAS recipients, with one clearly signalled exception – a posthumous award to one superhero, Captain Hamilton, whose bravery had astounded even his Argentine opponents.

July 1982: a televised advertisement for a serialised feature in the *Sun*.

In July 1982, a televised *Sun* advertisement for the serialisation of a story about the role of the SAS in the Falklands used the gunmen in black image: the SAS were shown bursting through a window firing machine-guns towards quivering women hostages. This suggested both a graphic representation of SAS efficiency and an identity of audience with hostage. The *Sun* series made heavy use of the repertoire of familiar images: the balcony scene, an SAS man in full rigout 'ready for action', the winged daggers, a still from *Who Dares Wins* showing men abseiling from helicopters, a photograph of David Stirling. The mode of address was such that it assumed a certain familiarity on the part of the reader:

COULD YOU BE AN SAS SUPERMAN?
Only a few pass the test of terror
Could you join the SAS? It's the dream of every young fella who fancies his chances playing football in the park or pushing weights around in the local gym.
But the answer, almost certainly, is no.[32]

[32] the *Sun*, July 20, 1982.

As a counterpoint to the general success story in the wake of the Falklands Adventure one rather discrepant report emerged which bore strongly upon the image of the SAS. This concerned Barry Prudom, a former member of the SAS Territorials, who was the subject of a June 1982 manhunt in Yorkshire by 800 police, after killing two policemen and one other person. One of the difficulties faced by the press was how to characterise Prudom's past association with the SAS. A variety of formulations was available: 'for a short time a member of Leeds B Squadron of 23 SAS Regiment (Volunteers), but not selected for further training' (*Daily Telegraph*, 5.7.82); rejected because 'he didn't like the discipline' (*Daily Express*, 5.7.82). The *Times* (30.6.82) quoted an official as saying 'he did not get across the final hurdle to become a reservist', whereas the *Star* (30.6.82) put it thus: he 'didn't last the course as an SAS volunteer. But the hard lessons he learned ideally equipped him for the rigours of a harsh life on the run.' Prudom's SAS background is therefore seen as enabling him to elude the police, and the expert tracker who joined them, for seventeen days. However, very little is to be found in the press reports about what he did during the intervening thirteen years to enable him to maintain such abilities, aside from a very peripheral reference in one report to a possible mercenary connection.

Against the 'SAS drop-out with a lust for violence' (*Star*) the police pitted the wits of survival expert Eddie McGee (variously labelled as 'Jungle Eddie' or 'Tonto McGee') whose manual *No Need to Die* was known to have been studied by Prudom. As the *Daily Mail* commented, 'It is an extraordinary development straight from the fiction of John Buchan or the television drama of *Rogue Male*.' Most reports said that the tracker, with two sons in the police, volunteered to lead the manhunt, although there were suggestions that he might have been 'called in'. McGee was described as a former SAS instructor and sergeant-major, with 22 years of service in the Parachute Regiment and a black belt in judo. This, then, was the successful, law-abiding side of the SAS, hunting down the flawed ex-soldier. More official military help may have been on tap. The *Times* (3.7.82) quoted Mr Andrew Sloan, Deputy Chief Constable of Lincolnshire, as saying 'soldiering and policing still have a lot of differences. However, I will say that the police are taking into account any help that may be available.' The *Guardian* (6.7.82) referred to 'two men in civilian clothes' who emerged from a camouflaged Wessex helicopter to consult with police during the manhunt.

The denouement came when Prudom was tracked down by McGee close to the Malton Police Station. The police, for the first time in Britain, tried to flush him out using 'SAS-style stun grenades'. He refused to surrender and shot at them. Originally they were said to have killed him; the inquest later found that he had shot himself.

A number of speculations about Prudom's motives for killing the two policemen surfaced during the manhunt. Criminal psychiatrist Dr Stephen Shaw said: 'Prudom may have some strange, unreal belief that he has got to prove to the world – and perhaps the SAS in particular –

that he was good enough for them after all' (*Daily Mirror*, 5.7.82). Another suggestion was that Prudom was out to kill policemen because he thought his ex-wife had run off with a former policeman. This last suggestion, played up by the press, was later discounted by the police. Indeed, immediately after Prudom's death, an intriguing story surfaced which connected him to possible spying activities against sensitive communications centres in Britain and the USA (the *Guardian*, 6.7.82).

If Prudom the negative hero was trumped by McGee the positive one, yet another SAS success story was the achievement of Sir Ranulf Fiennes of the Transglobe expedition, whose planning had begun in 'a redundant rifle range in a windowless attic' on the premises of 21 SAS.[33]

The ultimate accolade of naturalisation came with a casual mention in *Coronation Street* (Granada, 29.9.82), in which a character is congratulated for his general ability to handle situations with a comparison to the Regiment. This suggests that a particular meaning of the SAS has become deeply sedimented in our culture.

Conclusions

This paper has analysed the creeping naturalisation and gradual sedimentation of the imagery of the SAS in a variety of cultural products. In our view, this is part of the modification which aspects of the national culture are subject to under 'Thatcherism'. We have demonstrated how a given symbolic figure has appeared and reappeared in a number of situations. Quite distinctive modes of address and varied connotations and understandings are on offer.

The successful cinema release of *Who Dares Wins* with its retrieval of the past glories of the siege has been the culmination of SAS lore to date. One might speculate that beyond the particular inflections imposed by the present political conjuncture there are also wider cultural shifts at work. John Cawelti has suggested that the current myth of the violent avenger so prevalent in literature and the cinema is indicative of the moral uncertainties of our time. 'When it is possible to believe that the heroic individual could restore order to society by his actions, more controlled forms of violence were dramatic enough. With the decay of this perception of society, the act of violence itself, rather than its results, had to become the focus of emotional excitement.'[34] In his analysis, Cawelti notes the importance of the ways in which scenes of fighting have been prolonged through the use of slow motion and freeze frames, a style he thinks was originated by Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*. The constant refocusing on the moment of the siege bust is analogous, surely, and is emblematic of the celebration of a violent solution to a problem of order by a group whose secret identity bespeaks its unsettled legitimacy.

More recent appearances of the siege bust imagery have contained different inflections. A sequence of Steve Bell's *Guardian* cartoon strip *If*[35] offers a *reductio ad absurdum* of militarism and the SAS-State, as men in black abseil from helicopters, smash windows and take prisoners in order

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[33] the *Observer*, 'Transglobe' souvenir, p 8.

[34] John Cawelti, 'Pornography, Catastrophe and Vengeance: Shifting Narrative Structures in a Changing American Culture', in Sam B Gingus (ed), *The American Self: Myth, Ideology and Popular Culture*, Albuquerque, University of Mexico Press, 1981, p 191.

[35] In the week beginning September 13, 1982.

September 1982: the men in black attack social security scroungers in a *Guardian* cartoon.

to stop social security fraud. To be weighed against this pinprick of opposition is the appearance of a children's Christmas gift package of SAS gear, complete with balaclava mask and all the other appurtenances required for today's junior action man. Evidently, the field of represent-ation continues to evolve and there is no obvious way in which the 'meaning' of the SAS for different social groups may be judged. What, for instance, are the implications of class, age and gender for the social intepretation of the image? While there is no readily available evidence with which to answer such a question one may, nevertheless, judge that the very ubiquity of the figure of the SAS is an indirect, but telling, index of an authoritarian drift towards simple militaristic solutions to increasingly ramified political and economic problems. We would be foolish to ignore the signs of the times.

March 1983: window display in an Oxford Street toyshop. (Photograph by Mike Hughes).

(A version of this paper was presented at a SEFT weekend event on the Falklands and the Media, November 27-28, 1982.)

MEDIA STUDIES OR MANPOWER SERVICES?

ROY STAFFORD CONSIDERS TEACHING IN THE AGE OF THE TEBBIT 'TRAINEESHIP'

In November 1981 the BFI, in conjunction with Goldsmiths' College held a conference on Media Education. Its aim was to bring together teachers of Media Studies with a central, but not exclusive, focus on the secondary and further education sectors. Such a conference had not been held since 1976 and it was hoped that proposals for developments in the 1980s might be forthcoming. The conference did in fact raise a numer of issues[1] but this paper will concentrate on only one – the changes in the 16-18 curriculum and their probable impact on Media Studies.

Teachers of students in the 16-18 age group were the largest group at the conference and one series of seminars was age-range based. It soon became apparent that within the age-range group, teachers from different institutional and curriculum contexts had very different concerns. It is possible to divide Media Studies teaching within this age-range into three approximate categories:

1. Examined courses: CSE, 'O', 'A', CEE in both schools and colleges.
2. Media Studies as part of 'General Studies' in both academic and vocational courses in schools and colleges.
3. Media Studies as part of courses for the unemployed in colleges, youth centres, adult education etc., often funded by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC).

The first two may be seen as traditional and it is not the intention here to re-run well known debates about the desirability of attempting to legitimise new areas of teaching by campaigning for formal validation and certification. 'General Studies' is now often assessed with programmes devised for the currently merging Technical and Business Education Councils (TEC/BEC) and

The Design and Art Technical Educational Council (DATEC) and the real debate may be more concerned with which of (1) or (2) can be more successfully defended in a climate of cuts and falling rolls.

Type 3 is new. It was virtually unknown in 1976 and even now when changes in curriculum and funding as fundamental as those of 1944 are being rushed through, it is clear that many teachers, not as yet affected, are unaware of what is happening. At Goldsmiths' in 1981 the conference moved swiftly to initiate a response to the 16+ proposals but demands for a similar response to MSC initiatives were not taken up – perhaps because the conference was metropolitan based and the impact of the endeavours of the famous cyclist's son had not yet reached London.

A great deal has happened since the conference. The new Youth Training Scheme (YTS) has been accepted (or rather has not been vigorously opposed) and beginning in April 1983, some 460,000 16-year-olds are going to be offered the chance to sign a 'Traineeship' and accept £25-£28 per week as a Trainee Allowance and a place on a scheme lasting a year.[2] Some of this number will in fact get a proper job, some will be at least nominally employed but the majority will see themselves as on a 'scheme' or a course. A large minority may well resist the blandishments of the MSC and remain on the dole. The remainder of 16-year-olds, perhaps 380,000, will stay on at school or move into Further Education (FE) on full time academic or

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[1] A Report on the 1981 Media Education Conference is now available from BFI Education.

[2] All other MSC provision for 16-year-olds, e.g. The Youth Opportunities Programme, will cease from September. 1983.

vocational courses. (YTS is intended to cover 17-year-old school leavers as and when resources permit.)

The MSC has arrived as a major force in 16-18 education as well as training. It is immensely powerful and unlike Local Education Authority Committees, the local officers of the MSC are not directly accountable. On November 11, 1982, several local MSC offices sent out letters forbidding their 'trainees' to be involved in any kind of 'political activity'. Although trade union representatives will have some say on the new Area Manpower Boards which will oversee YTS, in practice the MSC will be able to move quickly on the basis of centralised decisions. But how will all of this affect Media Studies teaching?

Under YTS a range of sponsors will offer training schemes lasting 52 weeks. These sponsors will in the main be large private companies, nationalised industries, charitable organisations (e.g. YMCA), local authorities etc. The schemes will offer training, work experience and 'relevant off-the-job training' and/or further education lasting a minimum of 13 weeks (this looks like becoming a maximum as well).[3] This latter may be provided by the sponsor itself or by another training agency (e.g. the local FE college). It is clear that the college part of the scheme will be the most expensive to operate and the MSC is trying hard to minimise college participation. It is likely in some parts of the country that 'privatised' FE will be able to offer a cheaper service, partly through the employment of staff on supervisory grades – much less than the agreed rates of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) for college lecturers. The pattern of YTS will vary across the country. What does seem clear is that the students of lesser ability, who will not be attractive to employers, will be based in the colleges who will have to find the 'work experience'.

It is difficult to predict what trainees will find on offer in the education part of the scheme. Certainly the curriculum will be skills-based – literacy, numeracy, 'world of work' and 'job

[3] See the *Times Educational Supplement*, February 18, 1983.
[4] For more information on MSC ideas about training, see 'Foundation Training Issues', a Report from the Institute of Manpower Studies, summarised by M Farley in NATFHE Journal May 1982.

specific'.[4] It is important to realise that YTS is not a course in itself – the 16-year-olds themselves will come from a wide ability spectrum and specific courses will probably be developed for each group. Various curriculum models have been discussed and piloted in colleges and schools over the last two or three years. The best known is probably the set of core objectives in 'A Basis for Choice', published by the Further Education Unit (FEU) in June 1979. This is generally recognised as the most 'liberal' of the available models. It was aimed at a limited number of school leavers faced with the dilemma of re-taking CSE/O level or seeking a job. In the present employment climate 'A Basis for Choice' is no longer 'realistic', but it has been very influential. It is worth noting that Media Studies appears only fleetingly in the core objectives and cultural studies not at all. 'Vocational Preparation' followed from the FEU in January 1981 and a City and Guilds Course (365) was piloted soon afterwards. This course is basically a 'hardening up' of the 'Basis for Choice' proposals with a greater emphasis on skills teaching (the traditional General Studies of City and Guilds Craft courses is replaced by the more prescriptive Economic, Social and Environmental Studies). There is likely to be little space for Media Studies teaching apart from the demonstration of practical skills.

As the proportion of school leavers who fail to find jobs has increased in the last two years, it has become apparent that students with above average qualifications (i.e. CSE Grade 3 and above) are beginning to apply for MSC sponsored places. This has led to the swift introduction of special packages produced jointly by the MSC and TEC/BEC. In this way the YTS will effectively encompass the first year of TEC/BEC programmes (the same may well happen with City and Guilds). The particular significance of this is that MSC favours centralised control with standard units taught in all colleges, whereas TEC practice has been to allow colleges to design units specifically for their own students. In the case of General and Communication Studies, TEC has previously encouraged college submissions and much good work in Media Studies has been carried out as part of G & CS teaching. The MSC initiative threatens to close down the curriculum space in which Media Studies has made at least some impact. Traditional General Studies teaching is

likely to be replaced across a whole range of FE courses by Social and Life Skills with a narrower range of curriculum options and a greater emphasis on skills teaching.

The impact of the curriculum model which the MSC schemes employ does not stop at the boundaries of vocational provision in FE. It is also necessary to include the 17+ proposals from the DES which are now discussed as the Certificate in Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE). It is difficult to make firm predictions about the nature of future CPVE courses, but it would seem that young people who remain at school (or who transfer to college) will receive much the same as their counterparts who sign on for YTS (except the money). Certainly it would seem that Certificating and Validating bodies like City and Guilds, TEC/BEC and RSA are likely to dominate the new consortia which are supposed to implement 17+ (i.e. rather than the CSE Board).

CPVE will extend the new curriculum into schools (where TEC/BEC and City and Guilds have already revolutionised many sixth form time tables). It is quite clear, however, that Norman Tebbit is interested in other parts of the school curriculum as well. In December 1981 the White Paper, 'A New Training Initiative: A Programme for Action', which introduced YTS to the Commons also made reference to the importance of

... the last two years of compulsory education...
in forming an approach to the world of work.

A year later in December 1982 the MSC announced a pilot scheme for ten 'technical schools'. They were inundated with applications from Local Authorities and by February 1983 advertisements for new posts to develop this New Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (NTVI) were appearing in the *Times Education Supplement*. What is significant perhaps is that throughout this upheaval little has been heard from what is now often referred to as the Department of Education and Silence.

It would seem that for *Screen* readers the debate surrounding the introduction of the Youth Training Scheme focuses on two issues. Firstly, what tactics should be adopted by Media Studies teachers working in the 14-18 non-academic area? How should they make the best use of the provision offered within YTS? To

'abstain', as some of the left have advocated, would be to ignore more than half the age-group. It might also make it much more difficult to defend our practice in the more traditional parts of the curriculum.

If Media Studies teachers are to enter into YTS, they must do so in the belief that the scheme can be changed from within and can be moulded towards a socialist scheme for education and training. This necessitates the take-up of a second issue by *Screen* readers – an effective analysis of the developments in youth training, from a cultural studies standpoint, which will undermine the claim that the whole New Training Initiative (of which YTS is only a part) derives from consensus. This work has begun; within the Education Group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, in the Socialist Society's forthcoming pamphlet, 'Why the Labour Movement Should Oppose the YTS' and in a number of individual articles.[5] An entire issue of *Schooling and Culture* (No 12, Autumn 1982) is particularly useful and two articles in the *NATFHE Journal* expose very well the arguments within the teacher unions.[6]

If students on YTS (many of whom would not have attended FE Colleges under previous training arrangements) can be won for a 'popular education' which begins with basic skills but which leads to 'useful knowledge' and if teachers can co-operate with other trade unionists to ensure the quality of schemes and to protect the rights of trainees, then YTS might not be the disaster which many predict. But if the worst aspects of Tebbit's scheme are to be overturned, action must begin now. At Goldsmiths in November 1981, the 16+ proposals were taken up with urgency. But the new exams will not be implemented on a national scale for some time. Tebbit's White Paper outlining the Youth Training Scheme was delivered in December 1981 – less than eighteen months later, the first trainees are due to draw their allowances. The Manpower Services Commission does not wait for responses.

[5] Philip Cohen, 'Schooling for the Dole', *New Socialist*, No 3 Jan/Feb 1982; Clare Short, 'MSC Training:. A Device to Bring Down Wage Levels', *Times Educational Supplement*, October 15, 1982.
[6] Merilyn Moos, 'MSC – A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing', October 1982 and reply by Roy Boffy and Paul Cave December 1982.

A DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY

ALISON LIGHT REVIEWS AN ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY WITH IMPORTANT RAMIFICATIONS FOR MEDIA STUDIES

What is most insistently stressed is the need for a thoroughgoing analysis of the constitution of academic disciplines such as English, and for the inclusion of that analysis in any course of study; for a continuous foregrounding of Criticism as the discourse in which literary texts are produced and reproduced; for a simultaneous questioning of the status of 'the text' as the primary material of 'English' and as the ultimate source of 'meaning' and 'value'; for the introduction onto the syllabus of other forms of writing and cultural production than the canon of Literature; for a resiting of literature in history – both past and contemporary – as one specific discourse in the general study of culture; and for a full understanding of the place and function of 'reading' and 'criticism' in present society.[1]

Dr Widdowson and most of his contributors appear to share a deep hatred of art and to be united in a desire to abolish both texts and authors.

This second, rather succinct quotation comes from a review of *Re-Reading English* by Tom Paulin (a university teacher and poet) published in the *London Review of Books* last summer.[2] The extraordinary rancour of the piece, seeing the book as 'sophisticated gobbledygood... a nightmare of subsidised nonsense' and its contributors, 'frustrated sociologists... ferociously opinionated' is worth considering briefly. For Paulin, deep in apocryphal gloom, the book is 'a symptom of a morbid condition' or more specifically 'a tiny indication of the massive social crisis which economic decline and mass unemployment may soon bring about'. That –

slippage – it is the victims rather than the agents of Government policy who are responsible for social unrest – is revealing. In a similar moment elsewhere, Claude Rawson, reviewing for the *Times Literary Supplement*,[3] slides from the rhetorical flourishes of a well-meaning liberalism (which in both reviews thinly disguises plain insult and passes for sustained argument) to a suggestion that 'books like this make a principled defence of the humane disciplines more difficult', and, he goes on, they may actually justify Government cuts. This, in an edition where Rene Wellek, echoing pronouncements of the Cambridge debate, asserts as 'one of the main functions of any educational institution and the literary profession in particular: the sense of the past, a feel for tradition, a respect for the canon.'[4] The exhausting refusal on the part of these reviewers to see the wood for the trees (a crisis may be *social* but somehow not *political*), to recognise that it is precisely the definition of 'the humane disciplines' which is at issue, is neatly encapsulated in Tom Paulin's own disavowal – 'there is no such thing as a critical establishment in the United Kingdom' – only, he naively adds, 'a conspiracy of taste'. The *Times Higher Education Supplement*, not surprisingly, shared this taste and didn't review the book at all; it held instead its own 'symposium' on the value of literary criticism (sic). The latest word in *its* correspondence was given to one, presumably 'frenzied of Eastbourne', who exhorted 'members of the wider community' to start

[1] Peter Widdowson (ed) *Re-Reading English*, London, Methuen New Accents, 1982, p 14. Subsequent page references will be indicated in the text.
[2] 'Faculty at War', *London Review of Books*, June 17-30, 1982, vol 4 no 11.

[3] 'The Crisis, and How Not to Solve It', *Times Literary Supplement*, December 10, 1982.
[4] This appeared as part of the edition's 'symposium' on 'Professing English' – a title to which only Raymond Williams objected. No women were invited to take part.

organising more effective resistance against
'Belsey...', one of the contributors, 'and those
like her.'[5]

I've started by parading this dirty washing for
several reasons. Firstly, because what Paulin's
review and the acrimonious correspondence that
followed it for nearly eight months demonstrate
most clearly is the very existence of that 'crisis in
English', and the range of defensive posturing
amongst academics it has produced. For some,
like Paulin and Rawson, the political answer is to
retreat into a moral indignation which blames the
inadequacy of conventional English and its
teaching upon those who are seriously
confronting it and working hard to produce
radical alternatives. For others the defence of
their interests takes the form of a sad
scholasticism, the desire to keep knowledges –
including theory – to themselves. It might also
remind some who have forgotten, or perhaps
never knew (for, after all, who reads these
journals?) of exactly the extent to which English,
as Peter Widdowson argues, operates 'within the
untransformed education system of a still
powerfully entrenched bourgeois culture' (p 6).
Such reactions to any suggestion that English
may be a less than ideologically innocent field of
cultural and educational practice (or that we may
have to go beyond the terrain of the purely
literary to understand its social and historical
meanings) have to be read to be believed. This,
in a sense, is where some of us, now teaching
media/cultural/communications studies, came in
– and went out. But it's most important to
situate Re-Reading English in this context because
Widdowson's collection is addressed primarily to
those who are still there, who are working, for
whatever reasons, within the traditional
disciplinary boundaries of English, for whom
propositions like those of my first quote are daily
transformed into the reductive version of my
second. Finally, because what these reviews most
typically obscure are the issues actually raised by
the book itself, issues which, as Margaret Atak
has pointed out, are 'concerned as much with
pedagogical and institutional practices as with –
literary theory'.[6]

Re-Reading English, the latest in the Nw
Accents series, addresses itself then to what it sees
as a crucial gap between the body of highly
articulated theory which has grown up on the
Left over the last ten years (covered by the
umbrella terms 'post-structuralist', 'post-
Saussurean') and the actual conditions and facts
of English teaching – the syllabus, the
examination system etc – all the daily constraints
on the practice of a vast number of teachers in
secondary and tertiary education. English, Peter
Widdowson suggests, has stalwartly resisted and
rebuffed the impact and excitement of this
'barrage of finely-honed theoretical work'
retreating all the more cosily and firmly into its
'bland empiricism' (p 4), happily allowing
'history' and 'theory' to become the business of
other courses, and settling down again to
promoting English as the unproblematic study of
'the literary works themselves'. Thus Re-Reading
English argues for a strategic re-engagement with
traditional literary criticism, precisely because of
its continued centrality in state education and
because, in any case, the decision to move out or
elsewhere may well be a hypothetical one. It is a
strategic re-engagement though, since there's no
question of collapsing Eng Lit back into the
vacuum it occupied before theory and its
progeny took off. Widdowson and his colleagues
aim instead to span a territory of mediation: to
ask what kinds of interventions it is possible to
make given that body of work, and given also the
demands of 'straight' English teaching.

This is I think a very desirable and appropriate
re-emphasis on 'a politics of the possible', and a
correct diagnosis of the contradictory positions
many of us – teachers and students on the Left –
find ourselves in. It's one which Screen itself has
recently discussed.[7] Within English this
diagnosis recognises not only the cultural and
social exclusivity of privileging 'Literature' in
terms of a selective Canon which critics like F R
Leavis helped to enshrine, it speaks also to the
shoring up of the literary text at the expense of
attending to the reader's situation in history and
in institutions which certain theoretical
discourses might seem to prefer.

To me, a 'mature' student returning to college,
re-reading English meant very much bridging the

[5] Times Higher Educational Supplement, February 11,
1983, and February 25, 1983.

[6] London Review of Books, October 7-20, 1982, vol 4
no 18.

[7] 'Statement', Screen, September/October 1982, vol 23
no 3-4, pp 2-3.

gap which Widdowson describes. It meant trying to work out some relation between a traditional 'training' (Cambridge English), a politics which seemed to be taking place elsewhere (feminism), and a range of theoretical writing (Althusser, Lacan, Foucault...) which was, I heard, very relevant but which I literally couldn't read. The contributors to *Re-Reading English*, therefore, see teaching and education as a field of necessary negotiation, making connections which allow for the dismantling and reconstitution of the concepts – 'theory', 'practice', 'politics' – concepts by which people live as well as study. Consequently, they have decided also to write 'in as clear and accessible a language as [each essay's] subject will permit' (p 13). Additionally, the book is divided into two parts. The first offers an 'empirical analysis of English as an institution and as a discursive practice', the second 'case studies' (p 11) – instances of alternative critical work which teachers and students might use. The range of subject matter is broad, from a study of the Council for National Academic Awards to a feminist re-reading of *Daniel Deronda*, to an examination of a Government publication as a focus for a 'period study'. This range itself underlines the importance of 're-reading English' necessarily in relation to other discourses and institutions dealing with different areas of cultural production. The collection as a whole avoids being over-ambitious by proclaiming its own status as work to be used and developed. All the essays are short, none 'definitive', thus allowing for 'an immediate and collective intervention to be made' (p 13).

Certainly it seems a very healthy sign on the Left when its academics in particular can acknowledge the political advantages of offering the-less-than-finished object. Nevertheless, despite my sympathy with the book's project, it's on the problems of this politics of engagement that I want to concentrate: the question of the plurality of the book's audiences and of its reception – who it's for, and what they can do with it. This has political as well as theoretical ramifications.

Practically speaking *Re-Reading English* needs many different readers and knowledges. The essays, for example, on course design would interest predominantly faculty, the re-readings: undergraduates (though probably not Sixth Formers), while the overviews of theory (and I'd

have liked Peter Brooker's before John Hoyes' for clarity) might remain cryptic to all but postgrads or those on theory courses. Peter Humm's piece on reading television and the new fiction struck me as uncontexted, while other essays, notably Tony Davies' and Michael Green's, seemed overloaded from a pressure to be comprehensive, to avoid oversimplification, and to come at their material from several avenues at once. Often then the 'narrowest', most specific pieces – like Brian Doyle's on the historical and ideological constitution of 'English' as an academic subject, or Carole Snee's close reading of the May Committee Report of 1931, work best. Some repetition and restatement is of course inevitable in a collective volume (and even more likely with a broadly pluralistic approach like this), but I did begin to wonder how much exchange and mutual reading between contributors there had been.

I'm not just being 'politically pure in heart here' (p 13) – though it makes a nice change to be able to be – because, more seriously, I felt the internal disagreements between essays were often more confusing than productive. This again I think is partly a product of not clarifying whom the volume – and individual contributions – are for. Differences aren't dealt with in the text in any meaningful or self-conscious way. Widdowson's exellent introduction tends to gloss over and homogenise the very different positions taken up, for example, by Antony Easthope, Wendy Mulford and Tony Bennett (which I examine in more detail below). This is problematic not simply because their theoretical positions are different but because they may well be incompatible, and this needs to be discussed.

In fact I see this as tying in with a more serious and central absence in the text overall: the lack of any sustained and coherent exposition of different teaching methods and strategies. Texts are not just produced in reading and in criticism but in the activity of the classroom, the talking, presenting and above all the teaching which sets the limits and possibilities of the politicisation of its 'readers' – the students – just as firmly as the written word. If *Re-Reading English* could have consolidated its readership in both these senses it might have dealt more effectively with the bigger questions which surface at various points in the text but are never really confronted head on: how can the teaching of any text – whether of theory or the canon – be

productive of political mobilisation? What is the relation of any discursive practice like education to political action? What can usefully be achieved by teaching English – or cultural studies – *at all*? As Peter Brooker says (though unfortunately at the end of his essay) this is not just the question '*how* read?', but *why*?

Tony Bennett's contribution, 'Text and History' provides the most useful point of entry into this arena theoretically by addressing the part played by readers in the production of the text's meaning and of its changing political uses. Bennett argues that although it is uniquely determinate and limiting, the historical moment of the text's production cannot be frozen or idealised as guaranteeing either its meaning or how it will be politically mobilised in its successive readings throughout history. He suggests that the importance of the text's modes and moments of consumption have thus been under-estimated by Marxist criticism. It is to these changing and dynamic relations between text and reader, and between texts themselves, that we need to attend if we are to understand more fully the possibilities of politicisation which discourse offers. For if 'the text does not occupy a position but is always and forever installed in a field of struggle' (p 229), then as critics we need to produce

a number of different critical practices aiming at politicising the process of reading differently in different contexts and for different categories of readers. (p 235)

This then lays the ground which I'd have liked *Re-Reading English* to occupy more convincingly. In fact I'd suggest that that range of different practices is far more diverse and difficult for teachers than this theoretical formula might imply. Some of the essays do move in this direction – Graham Martin's for example, on the problems of interdisciplinary courses at the Open University, and Derek Longhurst's on Shakespeare teaching – but these threads need to be drawn together. Indeed, in some cases Bennett's piece, positioned as it is at the end of the volume, felt to me more like a useful corrective than a 'synoptic conclusion' (p 13). Both David Craig and Michael Egan's version of 'historicist criticism' and Antony Easthope's reading of Philip Sidney fall into some of the traps of (respectively) interpretative and

structuralist criticism which, in precisely antithetical ways, Bennett says, 'fetishise' the text,

abstracting it from the concrete and historically varying relationships in which it is inscribed during the successive moments of its history as a culturally active, received text. (p 224)

Craig and Egan, for example, compare two World War I poems; one apparently trite and imitative, and the other an account fresh from the trenches. I can't argue here at length with their claim that the latter, because of 'the poet's integrity as witness', and because of its 'masterly detail, almost all of which is not invented but experienced' (p 214) is 'superior'. I can only mention that their reading of literature as an unproblematic reflection of a positivised 'history' (whereby 'an agonised minute' of the life of one man in the poem becomes the record of 'our species', p 216) involves the same problems of idealism and even authoritarianism as the subject-centred interpretations of F R Leavis. Unlike them, I'd say that every detail of both poems was most definitely invented and that the one is (and was) as interesting *and* as politically useful as the other. Indeed if, as they maintain at the end of their essay, the history of class struggle could so easily be read off from the history of the novel, then we could all go home; there would be no 'crisis in English'. Ideology where is thy sting; literature, thy unconscious?

Which brings me to my final major criticism. One way in which *Re-Reading English* might have usefully focused these issues would have been as part of a central discussion of feminism, of, say, Women's Studies, particularly in Adult Education. Feminism is given exemplary status in the book as an 'active radical practice which directly challenges the dominant ideology in its specific social forms'. And yet out of a total of sixteen essays only *one* (Wendy Mulford's) situates itself firmly inside feminist debate, and only one other (Catherine Belsey's) gives it more than a passing nod. Four female as opposed to twelve male voices – surely this at least should have been a subject for argument amongst the contributors? I find it shocking that the book effectively marginalises feminism like this; what are its readers to assume about the *real* extent to which these Left male teachers have engaged with its challenge? It's an all the more revealing

lapse because, as I say, a feminist discussion might exactly have provided that actively political subtext to Bennett's essay: from feminism's entry into the debates around ideology in the early '70s, to the ways in which it has called in question and disrupted the categories and values of literary and educational practices whilst remaining crucially locked into the concrete experiences of real live students and teachers. For, as Jacqueline Rose has stated,

the problem of the institutional presence of women and the available forms of expression and speech for women, are inseparable.[8]

The question of a 'politics of reading' – the relations between subjectivity and the operations of narrative – have been most specifically articulated within feminism, which has also examined fiction as the possible site of unconscious production, as offering modes of transgression and resistance for groups of writers and readers, even from within an oppressive dominant culture. Such a discussion might then have followed up the implications of Bennett's piece: no one reading or critical strategy can be fixed for all time, for all readers, as intrinsically 'unprogressive'. Certainly this would have problematised Antony Easthope's call for a 'science of poetry' which treats it purely as 'arti-fice' (p 143) and wants primarily to theorise historical authorship in terms of the illusion of 'presence' effected by the function of language. For women 'identification' – between writers, their texts and their gendered readership – cannot be adequately gauged by the concept 'bourgeois'. Historically the collective notion of shared subjectivity has proved politically crucial – and continues to be so. 'Textuality' then must not be overemphasised at the risk of underestimating the agency of the subjects (of readers, and in education of students and teachers) in the production of meaning and political change.

In fact Wendy Mulford's lone and unretrieved essay makes this point, but it leads her to very different, and I think equally unhappy political conclusions. Her claim that as socialist feminists 'we should be making it our clear choice to study those periods, organisations and writers whose

work is exemplary for us in terms of our social and political struggles today' (p 189) begs the very questions feminism began by asking. What work *is* exemplary? What constitutes 'social struggle' and 'political force'? (p 188).We can't answer these questions without *simultaneously* taking account of the specifically gendered conditions of women's entry into representation and discourse itself. Her own choice of women's suffrage literature is a particularly uneasy one. Do these writers really say more about the social struggles of women than say the nineteenth century novel, the poems of Emily Dickinson, or the popular fiction of the 1950s? Her prescription could involve leaving out an awful lot of 'ideologicallly unsound' literature, as well as disqualifying as political – or even 'historical' – the small daily resistances of most women, which seldom make it into speech, let alone print. Further we risk ignoring too the actual reading habits of present and historical readers if we don't concentrate also on the relation between political value and aesthetic pleasure. Why do women (feminists included!) happily go on reading not just Kate Millett and Marge Piercy but Catherine Cookson and P D James?[9]

It's not then a question of abandoning a politics of reading to either relativism or subjectivism but of pursuing further the recognition – theoretically and in the classroom – that the activity of reading is no more intrinsically political than the activity of dreaming, but that it is the act of ordering, writing, speaking, teaching of it which is. Nor is it to propose educationally returning to the de-schooling Utopianism of the '60s, but to emphasise that the discursive/institutional relations of our learning and teaching are precisely political because they are *power* relations. It's not enough then to state your theoretical or *political* position at the beginning of an essay or lecture. And it's not just Bradburyesque 'bourgeois' students who can be alienated and mystified by 'progressive' politics. On my own critical theory course it was the other older woman student who gave up,

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[8] *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, February 11, 1983.

[9] Michèle Barrett explores some of these questions in 'Feminism and the Definition of Cultural Politics', in Rosalind Brunt and Caroline Rowan (ed), *Feminism, Culture and Politics*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1983.

exhausted and miserable. After all, in what senses in *any* classroom can there really be 'a struggle over the meaning of a text' when one contender has all the ammunition – the authority of hierarchy and economic power, and probably of age and gender too? Surely for socialists any 'reconstitution of English from within' must involve a redistribution of labour, a demystification of professionalism where it is based not on skill but on privilege. Teachers in Higher Education are unique in having no formal obligation to a discourse of 'teacher training'; this is an area we might want both to deconstruct and develop.

Perhaps then *Re-Reading English* doesn't press hard enough upon its own empiricism; I'd place more faith in the radical possibilities of the 'raw material' on hand – the social/cultural differences between teachers and students – than it seems to, but then perhaps this also is a mark of the relative isolation of Higher Education. I feel that teachers do need to consult the obstinate subjectivity of their students if the political engagement on both sides is to be other than 'theoretical', in all its senses. Indeed, what these theoretical discourses can offer at their best is a means not simply of displacing 'the subject' (whether the reader, the teacher, the student – even 'English' itself) but of locating it in a productive tension within the discourses and material social conditions of both past and present. Maybe it is those shifts and discoveries across discourses and selves which make reading so pleasurable and the process of teaching English politically important.

Nevertheless *Re-Reading English* remains a brave and useful source-book for those both inside and outside straight English. I do welcome it as part of a real attempt in higher education to construct a politics which is collaborative and diverse – what Raymond Williams has called 'a decent pluralism'.[10] Especially since I know that several of the contributors are involved in establishing Literature Teaching Politics groups across the country which hope to continue discussing and arguing around just these issues. Finally, perhaps we should all take heart from the ironies of that earlier invective which gave the book and its supporters such revolutionary status. We can plead guilty to being 'un-English', a 'dissident intelligentsia' which likes 'ideas and issues' and which 'must triumph', as Tom Paulin says, if only 'by force of numbers'.[11] *Re-Reading English* is a measure of that collective strength.

[10] 'Beyond Specialization' *Times Literary Supplement*, December 10, 1982.

[11] *London Review of Books*, June 17-30, 1982; and February 3-16, 1983, passim; 'The Crisis and How Not to Solve It', op cit.

Literature Teaching Politics is an informal network of regional and cross-institutional discussion groups, which holds an annual conference and produces a journal. Details of the latest edition are available from: LTP, Arts B, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9QN.

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journal of literature teaching politics

number 2   1983

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THE PAGE THREE GIRL
SPEAKS TO WOMEN, TOO

A SUN-SATIONAL SURVEY
BY PATRICIA HOLLAND

Are you a flirt?
*Try the **Sun's** sizzling sauciness test.*
Some people just can't help it. Every time they come face to face with a member of the opposite sex they start flirting like crazy.
It is all harmless good fun. There is nothing like a flirty encounter to brighten your day.

(September 17)[1]

A VOCABULARY OF EMOTIONAL AROUSAL summons laughter, thrills, shocks, desire, on every page of the *Sun*. But no sooner do they surge into being than these unmanageable forces find themselves tamed, re-expressed as fun, enjoyment, sparkle. 'It's all in your soaraway *Sun* today'; 'Your pow-packed *Sun*'; 'Life's more fun with your Number One *Sun*'. Fun organises and contains emotion.

The tone is exclamatory, celebratory, laced with a self-congratulation which verges on self-parody ('We're out of this world'). Everything in the *Sun* is subordinated to enjoyment presented with self-conscious relish – there is a continuous commentary in the *Sun* on the *Sun*.

Pleasure is organised across the pages of the paper through its photographs, layout, language, and beyond that two-dimensional surface there's an explicit address outwards to the reader, an address which is personal and direct. The reader is continuously invited to go beyond mere spectatorship and partake in the universal jollity. This is *your* pow-packed *Sun*, the flirty encounter brightened *your/my* day, *I* could be this week's Bingo winner . . . and indeed I could, for, as I read this paper, *I* am the reader addressed, I am the one invited, tempted to make myself a *Sun*lover.

A purveyor of pleasures, an organiser of your pleasures, my pleasures . . . . But are they my pleasures? Am I not, rather, repelled by those pleasures called on by the *Sun*, by its appeal to a trivial sexuality, by its insults to the female body, by its jokes at the expense of women, its flippancy . . . . 'Relatively few readers of the *Observer* can be close students of the *Sun*,' began an article by Charles Wintour on Sunday October 3. Locating myself an *Observer* reader, I, too, reject the appeal of the *Sun*, understand it is not for me, turn away from its address. To put it bluntly, I know the *Sun* does not want me.

The *Sun* does not want spoilsports, killjoys, those who are not prepared to join in the high jinks, the sauciness, to allow a flirty encounter to brighten their day. Labour party critics are a 'dreary and embittered band' (leader, October 2). The *Sun's* readers are different from those of the 'ageing *Daily Express*, the pompous *Daily Mail* and the boring *Guardian*'. It frankly warns us off, then celebrates its own rising circulation: 'Your super *Sun* has gone out of this world and set new circulation records for the galaxy. Last month we sold an amazing 4,249,000 copies every single day' (October 5).

So the *Sun* does not want people like me and I want nothing to do with

the *Sun*. But, pause .... Many things about the *Sun* repel me, but surely one of the things I find most unpleasant is its presentation of *women*. Yet when I read more closely I find that the *Sun* is not rejecting me *as a woman*. When it attempted to advertise in student newspapers with a 'Nudie-Varsity Challenge' it was, unsurprisingly, attacked by the National Union of Students: 'Page Three is grossly sexist, insulting to women and debasing.' But the *Sun* was sure of its ground. It called on a woman to speak to women. 'Luscious Linda Lusardi', the Page Three of the day, 'hopes that Britain's college cuties will ignore the spoilsports and try their luck on the nation's favourite glamour page' (October 15). The *Sun* rejects pomposity, boring analysis, critical thought, and it can confidently invite women students to reject those things, too, to ignore the spoilsports and join in the saucy fun. The *Sun* speaks directly to women readers.

This article is an attempt to put aside my initial feeling of repulsion, and my social knowledge that the *Sun* is not for me. It is an attempt to make some sort of sense of that address.

Next: drooling at breakfast time

The *Sun* has openly located its pleasure around sexuality – heterosexual sexuality. Its features and its presentation of 'news' are organised around forms of arousal ranging from shock and disgust to thrills or celebration, but sexual stimulus is a constant underlying theme, with the Page Three 'girls' – that particular, styled presentation of the female body as spectacle – 'those luscious ladies you drool over at breakfast' (September 20) as a central image.

Like all newspapers, the *Sun* constructs on the surface of its pages a series of narrative structures with similarities to the narratives we meet in feature films and novels: not the shaped and moulded narratives usual in those forms, but narratives nevertheless, organised in a temporal sequence with a range of characters who relate to each other in particular ways and whose stories develop in sequential episodes through both words and pictures. The narratives of a newspaper operate at different levels of abstraction, ranging from major structuring threads to close particularities. The narrative threads involve the setting up of conflicts, moves to new alignments, aims, resolutions of conflict, surprise twists, key characters and so on.[2]

The narrative flow of a daily newspaper has its own particular form. Its forward movement is structured by its regular recurrence, but each morning there is a pause, as the mosaic presentation of that day's edition cuts across the forward flow. Each day the reader gains a certain freedom of reading, can organise the paper at will – begin at the back with the sport or in the middle with the TV or the feature – guided by certain principles. The main eye-catcher is on the front, Page Three is on page three, and the sports news – male bodies in action – is at the back, the only part of the paper in which the discourse of sex is not made explicit.

[2] See Patricia Holland, 'The Invisible and the Obvious', *Lunatic Ideas*, London, Corner House Books, 1978, pp 47-64, for a close look at the interweaving of narratives over a period of time in the *Daily Mirror*.

Within the pages of a newspaper multiple fractured narratives inter-
twine, interweave. Unlike the traditional narrative there is no final
climax, no closure, for we never arrive at the last page. But the search for
closure is there, both in the work of the newspaper itself and in the
efforts of the reader. Thus, news and feature items are constructed into
the flow of the narrative over time. New events and characters are
brought in to fill the well-known roles. The different narratives influ-
ence each other and are cross-referenced. So, each day's edition is not a
random collection of items: moreover, we readers work at it, make efforts
to structure it and give it coherence. For we already know what Barthes
has put into words – 'a narrative is never made up of anything other than
functions: in differing degrees, everything in it signifies. This is not a
matter of art (on the part of the narrator), but of structure; in the realm of
discourse, what is noted is by definition notable.'[3] And the *Sun* itself
directly calls on us to make sense of its stories, gives us indications and
reminds us of what is notable. After all we know the plot so far and we
have a good idea of the expected outcome.

[3]Roland Barthes,
'Introduction to
the Structural
Analysis of
Narratives',
*Image-Music
Text*, London
Fontana, 1977,
p 89.

In the *Sun* the news stories are dominated by sexual dramas, and fea-
tures are dominated either by sex spectaculars or by invitations to sexual,
or more precisely heterosexual, games. Characters who make front page
headlines include football players like 'love tangle soccer star Andy
Gray', who starred in 'secret baby for Andy Gray, soccer star shock'
(September 28) which went through several daily episodes; entertainers
like Liberace, sued by an ex-lover ('a liar and a junkie: Liberace blasts
lover boy,' October 16); and, of course Royalty. Prince Andrew's holi-
day with 'sexy actress', 'soft porn starlet', 'sizzling actress' Koo Stark
reverberated through its pages for several weeks. 'Is that courageous
young man going to be corrupted and depraved – or is he just going to
have a bit of fun under the palms?' asked a defence councel at a porno-
graphy trial, reported as a '*Sun* exclusive' under the heading 'Randy
Andy's legal laugh-in' (October 12). Less well known performers are
confined to the inner pages under headlines like 'Girls slam sexy sirs at
school of scandal' (August 16); 'Love-in newly weds miss the jet' (March
22); 'Wonderbra! The mayoress strips off to a German band' (October
23). And this news, which is news of sex, is backed up by the sexualisa-
tion of public events. The *Sun* reported the return of the QE2 from the
Falklands with 'Liner of love. Buxom blonde Jane Broomfield yesterday
spilled the beans on the saucy antics that turned the QE2 into a floating
lovenest on the voyage home from the Falklands' (June 12).

The sexual activities on the news pages are paralleled by, and often
indistinguishable from, the sexual games on the feature pages, which
range from sex spectaculars featuring show-biz or other celebrities –
'How I saved my marriage by Bjorn Borg: inside the love nest of the
world's top tennis star' (August 19); 'Romeo Julio: beauties are begging
to get into his bed' (October 22) – to questionnaires and participation
games played by *you* – 'Total loving: train your body to tell him I love
you' (July 26); 'The mating game. Ten sexy steps to help you win a new
love' (February 6); 'Sex and the newly single girl: the *Sun's* special report

[4] ibid, p 123.

on how to cope with a love crisis' (October 14). Sometimes they mix show-biz with the everyday: under the headline 'Who are the naughtiest girls in Britain', *Sun* reporter Judy Wade asked various (male) touring performers to 'tell us which town served up the hottest receptions' (May 6 '77).

— The features addressed to 'you' tread a delicate line between what is accepted and what is possible. A base line of heterosexual monogamy is assumed, but beyond that, hints at saucy antics range from: 'Are you a cheating lover? A questionnaire to discover if you are in danger, by Wendy Leigh, author of "What makes a man good in bed"' (August 24), to 'Giggles galore at the naughty bring and buy' (an October 4 story about housewives' tea parties for selling sex aids).

The function of narrative is not to 'represent', it is to constitute a spectacle still very enigmatic for us but in any case not of a mimetic order. The 'reality' of a sequence lies not in the 'natural' succession of the actions composing it but in the logic there exposed, risked, satisfied.[4]

Yes, yes. We know all about that: that was written sixteen years ago. But does it work for *newspapers*? I will argue that to read the *Sun* as a collection of narratives and to see the people constructed in its pages not as 'beings' but as 'participants', to use Barthes' terms again, is the only way to make sense of what it is up to.

The all-important question which then arises is: how is the reader ...are the readers...are different groups of readers...included in, addressed by these narratives? The verbal address of the features is often directed to both sexes simultaneously: you could say it was double-sexed:

We all know lovers who cheat — and even some who get away with it. But are you sure it could never happen to you? How confident are you that you could never be tempted into a one-night stand? And that you would spot the signs immediately if your partner was having an affair?

'Partner' is a useful word. It assumes stability regardless of legal status and is not gender-specific. The questions in 'Are you a cheating lover?' also have a 'double-sexed' address, referring to 'the person you cheated with' and using 'they' and 'them' as singular pronouns. 'Have you ever suspected your partner of cheating? What did you do when you suspected them?' But despite the dual address of the words, the accompanying pictures show a high degree of differentiation between the sexes.

However, when verbal address does become gender specific, it is women who are spoken to directly. Almost all the features on sex are written under women's names, and in almost all of them when they speak to 'you', 'you' turns out to be a woman. Thus it is the newly single *girl* for whom sex is a problem: 'total loving' teaches women how to woo a man, and insists that we should 'never accept frigidity'.

Men by contrast are the implied, rather than the direct, addressees. They are almost never 'you'. Male attitudes to women are openly pre-

sented as predatory or contemptuous: Julio Iglesias says, 'Women are beautiful, I love them all and why shouldn't I?' (October 22); Kenny Everett says, 'People seem to like lots of nubile, scantily dressed girls on my shows . . . . I said go and find some fresh talent, rub in a bit of body oil and throw 'em on the set' (August 12). So even when the tone shifts to 'the greatest moment in any woman's life is when sex and love blend perfectly', certain assumptions about the male reader lie behind the address to his female counterpart, and those are the assumptions which provoke the knowing wink and permit the salacious joke. Women are spoken to directly, but it is men who share the joke. It is men who drool at breakfast time, but meanwhile the invitation is out to women to come and join the fun.

Aim for a look which is full of allure. A flirty smile in your eyes should not be difficult – especially with your favourite man behind the camera. And please, please relax.
* *Try to avoid a toothy grin or a Bardot pout. This sort of expression can make you look self-conscious. It's best not to copy anyone – just be yourself.*

(October 27 '81)

Every morning millions of readers/viewers of the *Sun* newspaper turn from the front page bearing today's latest thrill, and instantly meet the gaze, exchange looks with, find their own gaze absorbed by, that of the Page Three 'girl'. The daily turn of the page uncovers her flirty smile above the aggressive breasts that define her – a two dimensional strip-tease, performed on our behalf as often as we want. Her look of allure is always directed at us, her eyes always engage with ours, her favourite man behind the camera is, miraculously, replaced by . . . every one of those millions – men, women, children and old people – who make the gesture of turning:

Page Three is a direct address by the newspaper to its audience. It organises that audience, sorts it into groups, addressing itself separately both to men and to women. It presents itself as a source of pleasure to both men and women. Page Three condenses within itself the newspaper's view of itself and its audience: it declares how the paper wants to be seen, how it should be appreciated, used and enjoyed. It is the pivotal point of the *Sun's* address to its audience. It is central to its marketing and thus to its very existence.

But does Page Three really address *women*? Surely this pictured woman is no more than a fetishised image, designed for male gratification? Surely she tells us about the nature of male, not female, eroticism? Surely she is in the tradition of the pin-up, for male eyes only, to be overlooked or tactfully ignored by women viewers? Yet, although it does not exhaust it, Page Three dominates the meaning of 'woman' in the *Sun*, and women readers must cope with this meaning—a meaning which both does and does not refer to them, does and does not offer them back a sense of themselves. They look over it and through it when reading the newspaper in search of what is addressed to them *as women*...or do they?

In fact, as in the rest of the paper, there are important ways in which Page Three is addressed directly to women. It is part of the *Sun's* discourse on female sexuality which invites sexual enjoyment, sexual freedom and active participation in heterosexual activity: 'Never accept frigidity'.

In order to understand Page Three's address to women, we need to look at its position within the newspaper's narratives: first at the narrative of Page Three itself, and then at the position of Page Three within the multiple narratives of the *Sun*. First, Page Three: its central character, the model girl, is only one of the roles in the drama. Other characters are the photographer (always a man), the male viewers, who appear both as a group and as named individuals, and the female viewers, including other potential Page Three girls. Various peripheral characters make an appearance from time to time: the model's mother, her boyfriend, her boss. Finally there is the Voice of the *Sun*, the authorial voice which speaks directly to us, endlessly jokes with its audience.

Like Saussure's famous 8.25 from Geneva to Paris, the Page Three girl is every day different yet every day the same. Regardless of who plays her part, she occupies the same central position in the plot, for this is her drama. Like a character in any narrative construction she is not a 'being' but a 'participant'. There is one action that defines her—she bares her breasts for the delight of male viewers.

Among the obvious differences between the narrative of newspapers and that of, say, most plays or feature films, is that the individuals who get to play the parts, to perform the roles, are plucked, so it seems, from 'real life'. This is so even when, as is often the case in the *Sun*, these individuals are in fact professional actors: or when the parts they are called on to play do not masquerade as 'news'. Because of the special

relation of the newspaper narrative to real events, all of the characters bring into their roles something of this 'real life' quality. Thus a newspaper character like a Page Three girl is present in the narrative on a double level, she has a double presence. She is there in her capacity as Page Three, but she is also there in her capacity as a 'real life woman'. Such a double presence is much stronger in newspapers than it is in, say, the film star/fictional character duality in a cinema because it participates in the ideology of truth which underpins all newspaper discourse including that of the *Sun* ('We shall go on reporting the truth, the whole truth' – leader, October 8). A newspaper is about what 'is'. The concept of 'fiction' which makes possible the construction of a novel or a feature film is alien to it. It makes its judgements by appealing to a clear opposition between 'truth' and 'falsehood'. So it is with the Page Three model: although she *becomes* Page Three, although she totally fills that role, that is not all there is to her. She has a 'real life' role in the newspaper, too, but it is more fragmented, more difficult to grasp. It comes and goes, surfaces in different parts of the newspaper. Yet its very reality remains as a constant resource both for writers and readers.

A sense of *performance* is central to an understanding of Page Three, and the performance is there to be observed in the concurrent presence *in the narrative* of both performer and role. Alongside the visible construction of the role is a constant commentary on the act of construction itself, a constant self-reference. The newspaper 'contains' and visibly places its own particular narrative style in a way similar to that noted by Stephen Heath in regard to classic cinema: 'Classic cinema does not efface the signs of production, it contains them, according to the narrativisation described above.'[5]

Much of the *Sun* is written in terms of show business and many of those who people its pages are 'personalities'. And within the paper there is a continuous discourse on acting and on the meaning of performance. Dolly Parton, introduced as 'Hollywood's bustiest blonde', tells us: 'I'm not ashamed of the way I look. I have to live with it, so I might as well have fun.... I look óne way but I'm really another, and I look on the Dolly image just like a ventriloquist looks on his dummy.' Dolly clearly has the right attitude as far as the *Sun* is concerned. Writer Alex Harvey comments approvingly: 'What Dolly Parton has above all is a sense of good humour about herself and the way she looks' (October 1). Similarly many Page Three stories direct our attention simultaneously to the role (a bit of fun, a game, a joke at the lady's expense) and to the person who is playing the role ('I look one way but I'm really another'), in effect to a second, simultaneous role. Thus the act of playing a part itself becomes part of the celebratory tone of Page Three, for this is no ordinary role, but a star role, coveted by many women. So the *Sun* invites all those aspirants to try their luck. 'The hunt is on for girls beautiful enough to make their debut on Page Three' (October 28 '81); 'Girls, do you do an unusual job and want to appear on Page Three? Send a picture and details of yourself' (September 21); 'College girls, ignore the spoilsports and try your luck on the nation's favourite glamour page' (October 15). And it offers advice on how to do it. From the lesson on

[5]Stephen Heath, 'Narrative Space' *Screen* Autumn 1976, vol 17 no 3, p 97.

how to be a Page Three girl (October 27 '81) we learn that this involves at least two people, the model herself and the photographer, her favourite man behind the camera. Models are told how to pose (body three-quarters on to the camera), what sort of look to adopt (flirty smile in the eye) and what to avoid (heavy make up, fussy jewellery, toothy grin). The photographer is told to look out for his backgrounds (avoid heavily patterned wallpapers) how to arrange the lighting (avoid ugly shadows) and generally how to imitate 'the *Sun*'s top glamour photographer Beverley Goodway'. He constructs her picture and she takes a willing part in the reconstruction of her self. An essential quality of the Page Three role is the willing and eager participation of the pictured woman, epitomising the *Sun*'s construction across its pages of a willing and eager female sexuality. Page Three is 'the world's top glamour spot' (October 4) and to reach it is an achievement – for a woman – overshadowing other achievements, to be greeted with pride.

So, to look more closely at some Page Threes. Introducing Lesley-Anne, Jacqui and Merlita:

First, Lesley-Anne. She's the one the 'fellas in British Leyland's spares department' want to see, a regular on the pages of the *Sun*. 'Their patience is exhausted' when she doesn't appear, so the *Sun* offers her up to them, classily backlit by photographer Goodway. She's positioned three-quarters on to camera, her total nudity (which, we have been told, is often unsexy) relieved by a garment whose nature is difficult to identify, which she is perpetually either putting on or removing. 'Another Maxi picture of your Princess!' (Cue for guffaws.)

Jacqui is different. We're told that she wrote to the *Sun*, and to prove it part of her letter is reproduced. She asked to appear on Page Three as a surprise for her boyfriend, Steve. 'This will knock his eyes out. It will amaze him when he actually sees me looking at him from Page Three.' For, 'the *Sun* is his favourite paper and he always looks at Page Three.'

Then Merlita. She poses solidly, three-quarters on to the camera, no fancy lighting, no effects with bits of clothing. Her total nudity is only relieved by an almost invisible pair of briefs and . . . a policewoman's hat. She 'knew she would make an arresting sight without her blue serge uniform — and here's the evidence.'

Lesley-Anne is a professional, Jacqui and Merlita are amateurs. Professional Page Threes are fulltime models and have their following among the lads. The amateurs would *like* to be models: 'model girls seem to lead such an exciting life. I'd love to make it to the top — it's so different,' says Merlita, while Jacqui 'swims and jogs to keep her figure in trim'. But Merlita already has a job and Jacqui also wants to 'settle down'. She reckons that Steve will be so impressed that he will 'pop the question and ask her to marry him'. 'Over to you, Steve, for a happy ending.'

When Lesley-Anne plays Page Three the emphasis shifts from her to her audience, the lads at BL. For them the duality of her role is minimised. For them she is only Page Three, a picture, two-dimensional, to be cut out and pinned on a wall in the spares department. The *Sun* organises its male audience, and no doubt such groups of fellas do exist at BL and elsewhere, their expectations shaped partly by the daily appearance of Page Three as pin-up and by the mythology of Page Three as it has passed into public discourse beyond the pages of the newspaper. When such men are recuperated back into the narrative they become a male chorus, approving, appreciating, demanding more of the same.

These are the men addressed in a familiar way by another character who plays a part in all the Page Three dramas — the Voice of the *Sun*, the authorial voice who speaks the text of Page Three. It is the Voice of the *Sun* which grants the request of the British Leyland men, which entices women to come and take part, which offers cash prizes and, above all, joins the male chorus in its puns and corny jokes. Despite the fact that the credited writers are mostly women, this Voice is unmistakably masculine. It uses jokes to affirm male solidarity, nudges, winks and sniggers to assert male superiority: 'Pay as you yearn' (for the October 13 model who works in a tax office); 'Meter maid is just the ticket'; 'WPC takes down her particulars for Page Three'.

When Page Three is played by an amateur it is much more likely that the male audience will be particularised. Jacqui is looking at Steve from Page Three, Merlita thinks of the 'lads down the nick'. Individual members of the male chorus are here singled out for personal address and are amused when their two-dimensional pin-up turns out to be a flesh-and-blood girlfriend or colleague. 'The lads down the nick will get quite a shock when they see this!'

We think of their amazement compounded when her double presence on the page is complemented by her physical presence beside them as they gaze at the paper. The *Sun* glories in such shocks. It delights in constant changes of level and in the contradictions implied. So Steve is singled out to receive Jacqui's gaze, but he knows, and the Voice of the *Sun* reminds us, that she is also 'revealing her charms for millions of readers'. He may be a special individual, but at the same time he's just one of the droolers. The whole thing, presented as an elaborate compliment, has set him up. The knowing complicity between the Voice of the *Sun* and the male chorus constructs a joke on him which is all the better because of Jacqui's assumed innocence. She seems to think she can be Page Three *and* Steve's girl-friend at the same time. She taunts Steve to claim possession, to pop the question, but at the same time she keeps her body in trim by swimming and jogging because she wants to be a model. In this presentation she's in control of her two roles; she can play them off against each other. She keeps her autonomy *and* her femininity. She constructs her autonomy *through* her femininity. No wonder she's pleased with herself.

It seems that despite the never forgotten presence of the men in the story, the tension, the essential drama, is for women. It has to do with the aspiration to the status of model (autonomous femininity) and the jockeying for positon between that aspiration and other modes of femininity—between the marriageable Jacqui and the 'delicious 36-24-36' Jacqui. For women like Jacqui the search for autonomy on these terms involves both an achievement and a defeat. The Voice of the *Sun*, while pressing its version of the achievement, is nevertheless constantly working to turn it into a defeat. It must present this 'excess of femininity' as its own creation and work to keep it under its control and that of the male audience. Once more, the work is done by means of jokes, and for the Voice of the *Sun* and its complicitous male chorus the joke is always on the woman.[6] Hence its search for the most extreme expression of the tension, and its triumph in casting a policewoman in the role, turning her policewoman's hat from a symbol of authority into a provocative garment on a level with Lesley-Anne's underwear, something to relieve the unsexy nature of total nudity. After all, 'who would hesitate to be handcuffed by such a beautiful bobby?'

The crucial mediator in the transformation from working woman to model girl is, of course, the photographer. He literally stands in the position of the drooling millions and offers his view to them. But he has the privilege of creating the spectacle they merely yearn for. He witnesses the completion of Lesley's gesture, he organises the removal of

[6]See Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator', *Screen* Sept/Oct 1982 vol 23 no 3/4, p 85. In her analysis of a still photograph *'Un Regard Oblique'* she points out that, 'The woman is there as the butt of a joke—a "dirty joke" which, as Freud has demon- strated, is always constructed at the expense of a woman.'

[7] ibid, p 82.

[8] ibid, p 81.

Merlita's uniform and the redirection of her eyes. He awakens, brings out, the model girl latent in all women. It was Beverley Goodway who 'gave Merlita a taste of the model world'. Just as a certain sort of sex manual invites men to awaken the desire of their female partners, so we expect the expert Beverley, the prime ravisher, to advice male readers on how to draw out the Page Three girl concealed in their wives and girl-friends. Yet at the same time the feature on 'Do you want to be a Page Three girl' takes its place among the *Sun*'s frequent articles on sexual games, and, like them – though perhaps unlike sex manuals – addresses itself more to women than to men. In 'How to be a Page Three girl' women are not invited merely to respond to the photographer. No, it is up to them to prepare themselves, to work on themselves, to rehearse, to create their own autonomy. In this scenario the photographer is not the all-powerful creator, but the collaborator, adviser, technician. The Page Three girl must learn to ravish him.

So the Page Three role is clearly seen as a role, and is placed against the model's real-life persona which is anchored in normality. Even the professional models have had fairly ordinary jobs: 'Carole-Ann worked as a sea front waitress in Weymouth before she became a tasty dish herself' (August 16). Peripheral characters are introduced from this world of normality, most often parents and other relations who express pride at their daughter's achievement: 'My mother's very excited and terribly proud of me' says Merlita (September 23); 'I'm very proud of her and her Dad's thrilled to bits' says Ellan's mother (October 4); Pepita's thirteen-year-old nephew will be 'pleased as punch' and her boss 'thinks it's great' (October 13).

This act, this double performance of Page Three, is close to what Mary Ann Doane, after Joan Riviere, has described as 'the masquerade': 'The masquerade doubles representation; it is constituted by the hyper-bolisation of the accoutrements of femininity.'[7] It is not recuperable 'precisely because it constitutes an acknowledgement that it is femininity itself which is constructed as a mask – as the decorative layer which conceals a non-identity'.[8] In recognising the role *as* a role both the viewer and the actor have already distanced themselves from it and have put themselves into a position to manipulate it.

The action of Page Three takes place at a number of levels, and at each level there is a struggle going on, a struggle to define and contain, a struggle for autonomy and resistance:

1. The level of the pin-up: Page Three as a picture.

The three-dimensional flesh-and-blood men in the British Leyland spares department cut out a two-dimensional black-and-white picture from a newspaper for their own use. At this level the story is one of a relationship between real men and some meaningful marks on a flimsy sheet of paper. The woman is nothing but that picture, confined to the frame which surrounds it. The male spectators are the only actors. From time to time this real life drama is re-enacted in the paper, reminding us that this is the paradigmatic relationship which justifies the very existence of Page Three.

2. The narrative of Page Three: Page Three girl as double presence.

At this level, as we have seen, the characters work out their plots and sub-plots within the frame of Page Three itself. Male readers can follow the *Sun*'s attempts to win new recruits, can watch its attempts to overcome different sorts of resistance and can chortle at its jokes. Female readers can take part in the drama. Who will be Page Three tomorrow? It could be *you*.

3. The other narratives of the newspaper: Page Three as model, as real life persona, and the introduction of the Page Three principle.

At this level the model is not confined to her frame. She appears as a character in the sexual dramas which thread through the daily pages of the *Sun*. Professional Page Threes appear in the news and on the feature pages. One has a baby, another gets a part in a film; a feature on 'Page Three pioneers' (October 26) traces the lives of Page Three models from ten years ago; a news story on the sexual harassment of baby sitters is illustrated by an account from a Page Three girl. Amateur Page Threes appear in their real-life personae. After all there's a story here, we want to know what happened to them. Take Merlita: two days after her first appearance we were shown Merlita in her jeans, eyes to the side once more, 'an arresting sight out of uniform', under the headline, 'Life is sweeter for sun-struck Merlita'. The news that 'she has now quit the police force' is casually mentioned. She's 'going to make a new career in modelling'. 'My mother is terribly proud of me' but 'I haven't seen the chief superintendent yet' (September 23). On September 27 she gets a smaller corner, 'Magnificent Merlita Buckler, who took down her parti-culars for Page Three, faces a showdown with her bosses today,' and the cause of the problem is finally spelled out. It's her 'barefaced cheek in appearing topless in Tuesday's *Sun* – while she wore her police hat'.

Other amateur Page Threes force themselves into the role, confirming the *Sun*'s conviction that the Page Three principle is present in all women. 'Naughty Erica' runs topless onto a football pitch; the fleet comes home, and is greeted with the Page Three principle, the baring of breasts for male gaze. ('I wish I could meet her,' said the man who sold me the paper.)

The women we were introduced to as 'Merlita' and 'Erica' also exist out of print, unspoken by newspapers. There too for all of us the struggle between femininity and autonomy must be worked out.

Finally: playful Pauline's frolic or this is not the sort of behaviour one expects from civic leaders

Yes, but . . . . Millions of women read the *Sun* and, what is more, they go on reading it. But all that analysis has not changed my own attitude. My rejection of the *Sun* remains as violent as ever, I have not argued it away. And of course I do not want to argue it away, for I believe it to be grounded in justifiable reasons. However, I cannot fail to note that my rejection, too, is constructed by the *Sun*. The paper calls down on its head uninhibited abuse from the rest of the press – abuse, it may be noted, often couched in sexual terms ('The harlot of Fleet Street', *Daily Mirror* May 8). But it has incorporated that abuse into its very image of itself. The *Sun* is what it is, its vast circulation is what it is, precisely because it is not like the rest. The *Daily Express* is ageing, the *Daily Mail* is pompous, the *Guardian* is boring. The *Mirror* is losing readers because it did not support Our Boys in the Falklands, Labour Party critics are a 'dreary and embittered crew'.

At the 1982 Labour Party conference MP Frank Allaun described the *Sun* as 'the most reactionary, jingoistic and anti-working class paper of them all'. But the *Sun* knows that it compels unswerving loyalty from many of its readers – 'There's no *Sun* today, and I don't bother with the other papers,' replied a station paper vendor when I asked about the news. 'Our readers will see right through this hysterical charge that the *Sun* is anti-working class. No newspaper has a better record in defending the real interests of working class men and women' (leader, October 2). And, when censured by the Press Council for its reporting of the black people's day of action,[9] the *Sun* answered, 'We have more coloured readers than any other newspaper' (October 8).

What the *Sun* is rejecting is moralism of any sort, bureaucratic power disguised as moral and cultural values, the whole range of attempts to put something over on you, to push you around, re-expressed in terms of elevation, education, propriety. The *Sun* rejects all that in the name of a working class whose rise to prosperity is still a live memory. Those who talk of a decline in that prosperity are the dreary and embittered who resent enjoyment, who attack the right to have fun, to be entertained. The *Sun* addresses a working class defined by its modes of consumption rather than its place in production. It unifies and organises its readers in terms of their forms of entertainment, by cultural attitudes rather than by class solidarity. The fact that these forms of entertainment are actually provided by advanced capitalism disappears from view. Traditions of working-class discipline and organisation are rejected along with the middle-class bureaucrats, social workers and cultural moralists.

[9] For a look at the way the popular press treated the black people's Day of Action see Patricia Holland, 'The New Cross Fire and the Popular Press', *Multiracial Education* Summer 1981, vol 9 no 3, pp 61-80.

Rejected, too, are those who threaten this precarious position in a disorderly way: the immigrants, the muggers, the social security scroungers who snatch scarce resources and thus imperil the rest of the working class. The police are the allies of the working class in this scenario, defending them against attacks from below.

The *Sun*'s call for a particular kind of sexual liberation fits into this pattern. Sex is fun, a leisure activity, one of the rights of the consumer. Thus the organisation of gender roles takes place in terms of class identification. It is the moralists, the educators, the social workers who are the spoilsports, condemning Page Three as sexist and degrading. The *Sun*'s values are those which organise a working class – not the working class of labour histories, a class defined by self-help and hard work, but a working class which takes its pleasures when it can because they're only too fleeting. This is a working class that cannot be represented by the Labour Party. When Mayoress Pauline Duval demonstrated her acceptance of the Page Three principle, 'the attractive brunette stunningly shed the cares of office. Playful Pauline's frolic won roars of approval from her true-blue audience.' But her po-faced Labour opponents replied: 'It's not the sort of behaviour one expects from civic leaders.'

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FRAMEWORK